

**4** Kuwaiti artists display artworks at Contemporary Art Platform



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## Constitutional court delays election petitions till Jan 18

### National Assembly committee debates bedoon rights

#### News in brief

#### Heavy snow kills 17 in Japan

**TOKYO:** Heavy snowfall across large parts of Japan has killed 17 people over the last 10 days, with thousands of homes suffering power outages, Japanese officials said Monday. Much of the country's west coast as well as the northern region of Hokkaido have seen persistent heavy snow in recent days. National broadcaster NHK reported the dead included a man who fell from a roof while clearing snow and a woman found dead of suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in a car. — AFP

#### Canada bus crash kills 4

**MONTREAL:** Four people have died and dozens more were injured after a passenger bus rolled over in western Canada, with authorities saying Sunday that icy roads were likely the cause. The accident occurred Saturday evening on a highway some 330 km east of Vancouver in an area of British Columbia hit by days of bad winter weather. The regional health authority said 53 people in total had been treated at hospitals after the accident, with 36 having "serious to minor" injuries. — AFP

#### Iran hangs two murder convicts

**TEHRAN:** Iranian authorities have hanged two men convicted of murder in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province in the latest executions carried out by the Islamic republic, the judiciary said Monday. Elias Raisi was found guilty of murder in a family dispute in 2020, and Ayoub Rigi of a killing using a military weapon over "personal differences" with the victim. They were put to death Saturday after the victims' families refused to grant them clemency under Islamic law. — AFP

#### Hezbollah hands over suspect

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah group has handed over a man suspected of killing an Irish United Nations peacekeeper earlier this month. Private Sean Rooney, 23, was killed and three others injured on Dec 14 when their UNIFIL vehicle was attacked near the village of Al-Aqbiya in the country's south. "The main shooter has been arrested by security forces after Hezbollah handed him over hours ago," a security official said. — AFP

#### China to end quarantine

**BEIJING:** China said Monday it would scrap mandatory quarantine on arrival, further unwinding years of strict virus controls as the country battles a surge in cases. Under new rules that will take effect Jan 8, when COVID-19 will be downgraded to a Class B infectious disease from Class A, all passengers arriving in China will no longer need to undergo mandatory centralized quarantine. — AFP

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The constitutional court on Monday delayed a number of petitions challenging the results of the September parliamentary elections until Jan 18 and decided to send two judges to the National Assembly to open ballot boxes. Following the announcement of the results of the Sept 29 polls, dozens of candidates who lost the election filed petitions claiming there were mathematical errors in counting the votes and demanded recounting or recalculation of votes.

The court ordered two of its members to visit the National Assembly building, where ballot boxes are kept, to open them and make sure there were no

errors in the calculations. It set the next hearing for Jan 18, when the court will have the total number of votes obtained by each candidate. The court had earlier rejected petitions against two Amiri decrees that amended clauses in laws governing the election and declared the decrees were in line with the constitution. The court rejected other petitions calling to scrap the elections.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly committee on stateless people or bedoons held a meeting and discussed draft laws calling to grant civil, social and employment rights to more than 120,000 bedoons. MP Hani Shams said the committee also discussed several draft laws calling to transfer an independent govern-

ment body overseeing bedoons to come under the interior ministry.

Shams said the committee will meet government officials in the next two weeks to hear their views about the proposed bills. Bedoons claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship but authorities insist that a majority of them do not qualify for consideration to Kuwaiti nationality as they or their ancestors had illegally crossed into Kuwait from neighboring nations and destroyed their identification documents. The government body overseeing bedoons claims that it has material evidence that thousands of bedoons have other nationalities, and accordingly have lost the right to claim citizenship.

### Airport boosts services during New Year break

**KUWAIT:** In preparation for the New Year holiday, departments working at Kuwait International Airport have boosted operations to facilitate travel, with the increase in the number of flights. New statistics from the general administrative depart-

ment for civil aviation revealed around 139,000 travelers will be aboard 1,284 arriving and departing flights from Dec 29 to Jan 1. Dubai, Cairo, Istanbul and Jeddah are among the most booked destinations.

During this period, 642 departing flights will carry 78,000 passengers, while 642 arriving flights will carry around 61,000 passengers. "There are plans for the holidays which rely on increasing performance of operations departments and improving services for passengers to ensure that their movement is smooth from the parking lot till the flight gate," the administrative department at

the airport said.

"There is routine checkup of operation systems at the airport to ensure passenger movement is smooth without any congestions during peak times, as employees are working hard to provide comfort to passengers and ease traffic," the department added. "The holiday season also witnesses demand from residents to travel to spend their holidays abroad. Therefore, the operation department boosts its preparedness to deal with the movement of travelers, as teams are working constantly to execute field plans to organize passenger movement at the airport," it explained.

### Historic blizzard leaves nearly 50 dead across US

**NEW YORK:** US emergency crews counted the grim costs of a colossal winter storm that brought Christmas chaos to millions, especially in hard-hit western New York, where the death toll reached 25 Monday in what authorities described as a "war with mother nature". Blizzard conditions continue to prevail in parts of the US Northeast, the stubborn remnants of a massive sprawl of extreme weather including severe cold that gripped the country over several days, causing widespread power outages, travel delays and at least 47 deaths nationwide.

The extreme weather forced the cancellation of more than 15,000 flights in recent days including more than 1,700 on Monday, according to tracking site Flightaware.com. Buffalo - a US city that is no stranger to foul winter weather - has been buried under staggering amounts of snow, with the National Weather Service forecasting up to 14 inches Monday

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WASHINGTON: A man and a boy walk across the frozen Reflecting Pool towards the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall on Dec 26, 2022. — AFP

### Floods force Filipinos to flee homes

**MANILA:** Christmas Day floods in the Philippines forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes, civil defense officials said Monday. Eleven people were killed and 19 others were missing after a week's worth of heavy seasonal rain in the southern and eastern regions of the country, they said, updating earlier official figures. The flooding hit the south

on Sunday, with the disaster dampening celebrations on the mainly Catholic nation's most important holiday.

Rivers overflowed, swamping rural villages and highways as well as the cities of Ozamiz and Oroquieta, governor Henry Oaminal for the province of Misamis Occidental said on government radio. "The heart of the city was flooded including the public market. Power was cut off and there was no (telephone) signal," he said, referring to Oroquieta, the provincial capital with 72,000 residents.

"We've had floods before, but these are the worst rainfall and water flow levels we have ever had," he

Continued on Page 6



OZAMIZ, Philippines: This handout photo taken on Dec 25, 2022 and received on Dec 26 shows rescuers evacuating a child from a flooded area. — AFP



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## Local

# Health and security establishments countering drug, substance abuse

## Pharmacies urged to be more vigilant

KUWAIT: Health and security establishments are diligently working to unite their efforts and form a defense line in the face of substance abuse, a danger threatening the very fabric of society. Chief of the General Directorate for Drug Control at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Mohammad Qabazard told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) about the measures taken to curb spread of drug abuse and exploitation of the young.

He indicated that several of these drugs are originally used for medical purposes, like Lyrica and Neurontin but when misused lead to substance addiction. These drugs could be brought in from abroad in powder form and manufactured locally, or taken from pharmacies illegally using wrong prescriptions, the ministry official explained.

Brigadier Qabazard added that a study was conducted more than a year ago and was taken up to ministry's top management, which took necessary measures in coordinating with other concerned bodies, to locate and address loopholes in that law do not incriminate certain substances, making them easy to trade.

Health ministry decision issued back in May 2021, Qabazard stated, stipulates that concerned security bodies take immediate action against those who are in possession of drugs without medical prescription, referring them to prosecution where penalty could reach up to five years in prison, and penalty of drug trafficking could reach up to 10 years. A pain-relief drug named Phenacetin was previously used but has since been banned as it

could lead to death, was recently discovered being marketed between drug dealers as Lyrica, warned Qabazard.

He urged those working in pharmacies to seek accuracy as a new herbal addictive substance named Kratom has been discovered as being sold in the form of tealeaves. He further added that First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah's directives for crackdown on traffickers and dealers of Meth and chemical (industrial cannabis) with a penalty that could reach life imprisonment or execution.

On her part, Ministry of Health official at the Drug Inspection Administration, Dr Maryam Al-Yaseen, told KUNA that checking and examining the safety of drugs is integral to health security.

More than 1,000 facilities are periodically inspected by the administration, including 650 private pharmacies, 74 nutritional supplement shops, 21 private hospitals, 205 drugstores, and 67 vets, stated Dr Al-Yaseen specifying that around 15 to 20 are inspected daily.

Some drugs, Al-Yaseen mentioned are prescribed for epilepsy and patients dealing with chronic pain are illegally prescribed to be abused far from any medical concern. Dr Al-Yaseen indicated that recurring patients carrying prescriptions for the same drugs are a clear indicator of addiction, in this case, necessary measures will be taken against the concerned doctors and pharmacists, because dealing out such dangerous drugs should not be done so easily. — KUNA

## Major events concerning Kuwait parliament in 2022

KUWAIT: In 2022, Kuwait witnessed several major developments and events related to the Kuwaiti National Assembly (parliament), mainly swearing by MPs of the constitutional oath during the first regular session of the 17th legislative term. The following is a list of major events and activities connected with the Kuwaiti parliament:

**Jan 4:** The Prime Minister and his Cabinet took the constitutional oath at the start of National Assembly's ordinary session.

**Jan 4:** National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem announced he has received an interpellation request from MP Hamdan Al-Azmi against Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah that consists of five aspects.

**Jan 12:** Speaker Al-Ghanem adjourned the session due to lack of quorum, and government non-attendance according to Article 116 of the Kuwaiti constitution.

**Jan 13:** Kuwaiti National Assembly approved in the second reading a draft law to amend some provisions of the Printing and Publishing Law.

**Jan 18:** Speaker Al-Ghanem announced that 10 lawmakers presented a no-confidence motion against Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

**Jan 25:** The National Assembly in its special session agreed to increase Kuwait Credit Bank's (KCB) capital to provide liquidity for housing loans.

**Jan 26:** The National Assembly renewed confidence in Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

**Feb 1:** Speaker Al-Ghanem announced the interpellation motion submitted by MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri to Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

**Feb 1:** The National Assembly rejected a Public Prosecution request to scrap the parliamentary immunity of MPs Mohammad Al-Mutair, Khaled Al-Otaibi and Thamer Al-Suwait.

**Feb 1:** The National Assembly rescinded the immunity of MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri at the request of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

**Feb 8:** The National Assembly discussed the grilling of Foreign Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah over alleged mismanagement, submitted by MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, and 10 MPs filed a no-confidence vote against the minister.

**Feb 9:** The National Assembly approved a number of recommendations regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) travel restrictions and health guidelines in general.

**Feb 16:** MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf handed Parliament Speaker Al-Ghanem a grilling motion filed against Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Ali Al-Mousa.

**March 8:** Parliament Speaker Al-Ghanem said that 10 Kuwaiti members of parliament lodged a no-confidence motion against Minister Al-Mousa.

**March 9:** Speaker Al-Ghanem declared that he



KUWAIT: Kuwait's lawmakers attend a parliament session in Kuwait City in this file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

had received an interpellation motion from MPs Dr. Hassan Johar, Khaled Al-Otaibi and Muhannad Al-Sayer to His Highness the Prime Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

**March 15:** The National Assembly approved the postponement motion requested by the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, to defer interpellation submitted against him.

**March 15:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of interior Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah took constitutional oath before the parliament session in line with Article 91 of the Constitution.

**March 16:** The National Assembly renewed confidence in Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Youth Affairs Ali Al-Mousa.

**March 29:** National Assembly Speaker Al-Ghanem announced that 10 MPs filed a "non-cooperation" motion against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his cabinet had submitted resignation.

**May 12:** The Arab parliamentary scout union honored parliamentary Speaker Al-Ghanem with the 2022 "order of the falcon" award for his support of the scouting movements in the Arab world.

**May 20:** Speaker Al-Ghanem headed to Cairo to partake in the urgent meeting for the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) focusing on development in occupied Jerusalem.

**May 31:** Speaker Al-Ghanem headed to Brussels meet with top officials from the European parliament.

**June 14:** The National Assembly approved a KD-3,000-grant (around \$10,000) for retirees and their benefactors.

**June 19:** Speaker Al-Ghanem arrived in Istanbul to partake in an international conference organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Turkish parliament.

**June 29:** Speaker Al-Ghanem headed to Azerbaijan to partake the Baku Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement Parliamentary Network.

**Sept 29:** Elections for the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly were held.

**Oct 18:** His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah opened the first regulation session of the 17th legislative term for the National Assembly.

**Oct 18:** Members of Parliament swear the constitutional oath during the first regular session of the 17th legislative term for the National Assembly.

**Oct 18:** The Cabinet, in an unprecedented historical step, did not partake in the sessions forming the National Assembly's committee in adherence with the leadership's instructions.

**Oct 18:** The National Assembly chose MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun as Speaker of parliament during its first session of the 17th legislative term. The positions of deputy speaker, secretary, and other leading posts were also selected during the session.

**Oct 18:** The National Assembly approved in the first session of its 17th legislative term the formation of several committees including the human rights and the food security amongst others.

**Oct 30:** The National Assembly's Interior and Defense Committee approved two draft laws concerning the elections of MPs, voting via the civil ID Card, and the reconsidering of constituent inclusion in some areas.

**Nov 2:** The National Assembly approved a draft proposal for the 12/1963 law concerning the parliament statute and discussions of the Amiri speech.

**Nov 21:** The National Assembly received the interpellation motion by MP Hamdan Al-Azmi against the Minister of Public Works, Minister of Electricity, Water, and renewable Energy Resources, Dr Amani Bugmamz. **Nov 30:** The National Assembly referred Amiri speech to the committee concerned with preparing a parliamentary reply to the document.

**Nov 30:** The National Assembly approved law 6/2022 including several areas in electoral constituencies based on geographical location.

**Nov 30:** The National Assembly approved law 5/2022 approving voting based on the address found in eligible voters' Civil ID Cards.

**December 1:** Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah was appointed Kuwait Investment Authority's board member.

**December 12:** The Cabinet okayed the appointment of Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi as deputy foreign minister, and Mohammad Bu-Erki as chief of the National Cybersecurity Center.

**Dec 13:** The National Assembly passed draft proposals concerning health insurance for Kuwaiti retirees. — KUNA

## PART chief and deputy resign

KUWAIT: The head of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation Hussain Al-Khayyat and his deputy Khaled Bin Salamah have submitted their resignations to Public Works Minister Amani Bugammaz. "The resignations were submitted around a week ago, but the minister has yet to look into the matter. The reason for the resignation includes not hiring a long-term director for the authority and not hiring more employees, as total employees at the authority are only around 40," sources told Kuwait Times. "Moreover, reasons include the inability of the executive panel in the authority to complete the instructions of the administrative council, as it is doing work beyond its specialization instead of its main work. The final reason includes the authority not being independent from the ministry, and difficulties in working during the current circumstances," sources added.

## Fire engulfs 14 storey building



KUWAIT: The Public Relations Department at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) was able to extinguish a fire in Khaitan. Various injuries were reported on Monday. The central command sent fire squads from Jeleeb, Sabhan and Farwaniya stations to the scene. The fire started on the 13th floor of a 14 storey building with thick smoke billowing from the building. Firefighters were able to evacuate the building and combat the fire. The injured residents were sent to the hospital for treatment.

## Alghanim Industries sponsors Takween Reading Marathon

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries (Kutayba Alghanim Group), one of the largest private companies in the region, recently sponsored the 10th biannual Takween Charity Reading Marathon organized and hosted by Takween Bookstore at Design District, Shuwaikh. The two-day marathon, from 16 to 17 December, hosted a multitude of avid readers all enjoying a family friendly event with a focus on education.

The event marks the first collaboration between Alghanim Industries and Takween Bookstore, a unique and community-driven event in which sponsors pledge to donate KD 1 for every 10 pages read by participants during the marathon. This year's marathon welcomed a total of 786 participants who read a grand total of 54,310 pages. The considerable donations are all channeled into pathways that provide financial aid to underserved students, alleviating the many academic fees that hinder their educational experience.

Alongside its key sponsorship of a cause central to Alghanim Industries' many commitments toward



more equitable education for all, the company donated 10 Kindle e-reader devices to be raffled for all participants in the charity event, courtesy of X-cite by Alghanim Electronic. Alghanim Industries also provided all participants in the reading marathon with complimentary coffee and tea beverages through Costa Coffee, the world-famous coffee house brand operated by Alghanim Industries in several markets across the region.

Alghanim Industries is a recurring sponsor of a great number of education focused initiatives, highlighting the company's longstanding support for greater accessibility in learning through its campaigns with local private companies, educational institutions, government programs and nongovern-



mental organizations. Alghanim Industries' partnered campaigns such as sponsoring Kuwait Codes, collaborating with INJAZ-Kuwait and providing scholarships with Arab Open University, are all aimed at empowering the youth and their educational pursuits.

Commenting on the grand success of the reading marathon and the great reception it held in the community, the head of Takween's organizing committee, Khadeija Alshammari, expressed her gratitude for the "utmost support" by the private sector and its sponsorship of the marathon's 10th event. Alshammari also added that the "shared values" between the participating companies yielded a "substantial result that will ensure a large portion of underserved children receive the education they deserve."



Local



His Highness the Amir  
Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad  
Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince  
Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad  
Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

## Major events concerning the Amir in 2022

**KUWAIT:** In 2022, Kuwait witnessed several major developments and events pertinent to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, mainly including his talks with the presidents of Egypt and Algeria. The following is a list of major events connected with His Highness the Amir in 2022:

**Jan 20:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in Germany on a private visit.

**Feb 5:** His Highness the Amir returned home after a private visit to Germany.

**Feb 22:** His Highness the Amir discussed with visiting Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, means of boosting relations, common interests, and international and regional developments.

**Feb 23:** His Highness the Amir received Algerian President Abdelmajid Tabboune, accompanied by senior officials.

**April 24:** On behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivered a speech in the last 10 days of Ramadan focusing on national unity and the protection of the country.

**May 12:** His Highness the Amir departed Kuwait to Italy on a private visit.

**May 25:** His Highness the Amir returned home after a short private visit abroad.

**Sept 3:** His Highness the Amir left for Italy on a private vacation.

**Sept 14:** His Highness the Amir returned home after a private visit to Italy.

**Oct 8:** His Highness the Amir headed to Italy for medical checkups.

**Oct 22:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned from Italy after the regular medical checkups.

**Dec 12:** His Highness the Amir arrived in Italy on a private vacation.

### Events concerning the Crown Prince

In 2022, Kuwait witnessed several major developments and events related to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, chiefly participation in the 31st Arab Summit held in Algeria, the UN climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and FIFA World Cup kickoff in Qatar. The following is a list of major events connected with His Highness the Crown Prince in 2022:

**February 22:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received visiting Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi.

**Feb 23:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Algerian President Abdelmajid Tabboune and the delegation

accompanying him, on his official visit to Kuwait.

**April 11:** Representative of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Interior and Defense facilities, delivering a speech congratulating personnel on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

**April 12:** Representative of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince visited a Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) facility, delivering a speech congratulating personnel on the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

**June 7:** His Highness the Crown Prince received the Crown Prince of Jordan Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein who was in Kuwait on an official visit.

**June 22:** On behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered a speech assuring to citizens that the constitution was protected and announced dissolution of the parliament in line with article 107 of the constitution and setting the scene for parliamentary elections.

**July 16:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered a speech at the Jeddah Security and Development Summit featuring the participation of the GCC member states, the US, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq.

**Sept 17:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince headed a high-level delegation to the United Kingdom to offer condolences on the passing away of British Queen Elizabeth II.

**Nov 1:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince headed Kuwait's delegation to the 31st Arab Summit held in Algeria.

**Nov 2:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered a speech at the 31st Arab Summit, calling on the world to contribute to the success of the Middle East process.

**Nov 7:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered a speech at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention and second summit for the Middle East initiative held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

**Nov 20:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the opening of the 2022 World Cup held in Doha, Qatar.

**Dec 8:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince headed Kuwait's delegation to the 43rd GCC Summit as well as the GCC-China and Arab China Summits all held in Riyadh Saudi Arabia.

**Dec 9:** Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince delivered Kuwait's speech at the GCC-China summit held in Riyadh. — KUNA



Fadel Al-Dosari

TEC wishes them the best in their future endeavors. It is reported that Al-Dosari has over 17 years of experience, where he worked in many sectors including banking, industrial and investment, and was one of the most proactive people in bringing and operating Winter Wonderland Kuwait.

TEC was founded in 1976 in Kuwait, and its job includes the development, administration and financing of tourist and entertainment projects in Kuwait in cooperation with government and private institutions in the country. The company currently handles Kuwait Towers, Khairan, Messila beach, Egaila beach, the seafront and Shaab Club among others.

# Senior security official highlights importance of interagency coop

## MEW credits 947 workers with annual leave cash

**KUWAIT:** Cooperation amongst the civil, security and military bodies is vital for addressing the new challenges and safeguarding the country's internal security, said Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Lt-Gen Anwar Al-Barjas made the comments while inspecting a joint drill by these bodies at Al-Erada Square, in Kuwait City, according to a statement by the MoI security media and public relations department on Sunday.

Al-Barjas, also the commander of the coordinative leadership for internal security protection, was accompanied by assistant undersecretary for traffic and operations Maj-Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh and some senior officials, it added. Al-Barjas lauded readiness for the drill and stressed the necessity of continued follow-up of the exercise programs to raise readiness of the units and bodies and communication.

He also extolled the efforts made by the Ministry of Defense in providing all forms

of support for the success of the drill, according to the statement. Al-Barjas listened to a briefing on preparations, needs and equipment necessary to start the joint exercise under the umbrella of the Civil Defense Committee. Finally, he was briefed on the programs and mechanisms to implement scenarios and procedures, and unify concepts between the military and civil bodies to achieve integrated coordination of the participating parties and reach readiness for any emergency, it said.

### Annual leave cash

In another development, the Electricity Ministry on Monday credited the accounts of 947 employees who cashed their annual leaves. "New batches will be credited daily until all the 10,900 employees who have requested to cash their leaves are paid. It is expected around 170 employees will be credited today," sources told Kuwait Times. Acting

Undersecretary Mutlaq Al-Otaibi congratulated the employees who were paid, wishing them luck in their service for the ministry and the country.

### Govt to increase pensions

Meanwhile, government sources assured there is no delay in increasing the pensions of retired people, which includes raising the minimum amount to KD 1,000. "The situation only requires the approval of the Cabinet, which preferred to postpone the official announcement until complete coordination with the parliamentary financial committee is done," sources revealed to Kuwait Times. "There are parliamentary calls to increase the minimum pension to KD 1,500. The increase could be announced before the turn of the new year as the finance ministry has concluded preparing the increase with the social security and the file has been submitted to the financial committee at the Cabinet for final approval," sources explained.



Foreign Minister receives US representatives, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism.

## Kuwait FM and US lawmakers discuss relations

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday ranking US Representatives, led by David N Cicilline - Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism, now on an official visit to Kuwait. The meeting dealt with the friendly relations, the partnership and cooperation

between Kuwait and the United States, which kept strengthening over the past six decades.

Sheikh Salem commended the strides made towards realization of the shared aspirations in vital areas, including economic, the cultural, the educational and security ones. The Kuwaiti minister noted that the two friendly countries work together to promote diplomatic coordination, and share experience in combating extremism and terrorism.

On their part, the US lawmakers reaffirmed the US firm commitment to the safety and security of Kuwait, and expressed gratitude for the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people for hosting the US troops. They also appre-

ciated the humanitarian and diplomatic efforts made by Kuwait over the recent years to restore security and stability in the region. The US Representatives highlighted the need to promote economic cooperation and unlock the potentials of joint investment particularly in the field of energy.

Both sides also discussed a range of regional and international issues of common concern. The US delegation includes members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Joe Wilson, Susan Wild and Sara Jacobs, Member of the Committee on Homeland Security Kat Cammack, and Member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs Amata Coleman Radewagen. — KUNA

## Hawally, KISR working to develop agriculture

**KUWAIT:** Governor of Hawally and acting Capital governor Ali Al-Asfar said the governorate is working with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to fix tap water in order to have water that is beneficial for agriculture. "The governorate ensures to cooperate with all institutions to gain from their experience in order to serve the needs of citizens in the governorate," Al-Asfar said, praising KISR and its national staff's initiative, which shows the spirit of nationalism and the active participation of their ideas and research, which will benefit



Kuwait. Head of water technicians Dr Adel Al-Haddad, scientific researcher Dr Sara Al-Haddad and researcher Dr Mohammed

Al-Muntaser supervised the execution of consultancy services to operate the project in order to benefit from it.



## TEC announces its new CEO Fadel Al-Dosari

**KUWAIT:** Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC) announced Fadel Al-Dosari has become its new CEO and will start his tenure on Jan 3, 2023. This comes after three months of efforts exerted by the hiring and nomination committee from the administrative council in cooperation with PROCAPITA consulting company, who rated the CVs of applicants, who underwent a variety of tests and interviews to ensure the right person has been chosen to lead the entertainment future of Kuwait through TEC.

After hiring procedures concluded, the administrative council selected Al-Dosari for the position, and all other applicants have been thanked, and the

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A ship dock at the Shuwaikh Seaport. Shuwaikh Port is considered the main commercial port in Kuwait. The ships traffic entering and leaving the port is through a navigation channel dredged inside Kuwait Bay. — By Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Iraq PM: Gulf Cup chance to bolster Baghdad-GCC ties

BAGHDAD: The upcoming 25th Gulf football Cup would present a chance to further ties between Iraq and the rest of the Gulf countries, said Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani on Monday. A statement by the Prime Minister office indicated that this statement came during a meeting between Al-Sudani and Ambassadors of the GCC countries in Basra city, southern Iraq. During the meeting, ways to enhance relations in various fields were discussed, added the statement.

GCC Ambassador commended Iraq for hosting the upcoming tournament, wishing the organizers the best of luck. The 25th Gulf Cup is scheduled on January 6-19, 2023. Iraq, the six GCC states, and Yemen will partake in the tournament. Iraq's PM said all government efforts and potential have been "harnessed" to make the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup successful.

This came during a visit paid by Al-Sudani to host Governorate Basra, south of Iraq, to be briefed on latest service, security and technical preparations for the championship slated for January 6, the Cabinet media office said in a statement. All matches will be broadcast for free until January 19; the final match and closing ceremony.

Meanwhile, Al-Sudani held a meeting with Basra service and sectoral departments' staff, describing the tournament an "important event" for a better Iraq. Last Saturday, championship tickets were on sale through direct and online platforms, in preparation for the event featuring the teams of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen and Iraq. — KUNA

# Kuwait charity distributes aid supplies to Palestinians

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity announced Monday the distribution of various aid supplies to 400 Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip. The aid distribution is part of the Kuwaiti charity's winter campaign which began on December 21 and continues until the end of winter. In a statement to KUNA, the director of the charity's project management Abdullah Al-Obaidli said that the association seeks, through winter aid, to alleviate the suffering of poor families by providing them with basic life necessities, as the poverty rate in the Gaza Strip has reached about 64 percent.

Al-Obaidli explained that the assistance consisted of food parcels delivered to 150 families,

medical supplies and medicines, and protection materials and winter insulators distributed to 200 families. He praised the contributions of charitable people that helped meet the needs of families in the winter season. Al-Najat Charity continues to implement its winter campaigns for the sixth year in a row and will continue its assistance for this year in 13 countries in coordination with the Ministries of Affairs and Foreign Affairs and other concerned authorities.

Also, Kuwaiti Al-Najat Charity distributed aid to 3,500 Syrian refugees in Lebanon as part of a humanitarian and relief campaign to alleviate their suffering during the winter. The aid, which was

given out to Syrian refugees at Ersal refugee camp in northeastern Lebanon, includes food parcels, heating fuel and shelters, Al-Najat Director of Resources and Campaigns Omar Al-Shaqra told KUNA.

Kuwait is working to improve the living conditions of thousands of refugees in face of cold weather and shortage of foodstuff, he said. Kuwaiti charities and humanitarian organizations are keen on offering relief aid to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, as well as Lebanese families in need through the year. However, they increase their relief efforts during the winter season due to tough weather conditions in Lebanon. — KUNA



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Artworks by Kuwaiti Fine Artist Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi.

## Kuwaiti artists display artwork at Art Platform

KUWAIT: The famous Kuwaiti Fine Artists Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi and Thuraya Al-Baq sami displayed their artworks at the Contemporary Art Platform (CAP). Artist Al-Awadhi showcased his illustration paintings that dealt with various topics such as humanity, environment, economy and politics, and were published in the famous French magazine (Diplomatique). Al-Baq sami displayed her paintings, which she completed during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown, showing that the world's population lived in isolation due to the virus. — KUNA



Famous Kuwaiti Fine Artist Thuraya Al-Baq sami



Famous Kuwaiti Fine Artist Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi



Artworks by Kuwaiti Fine Artist Thuraya Al-Baq sami.



Artworks by Kuwaiti Fine Artist Thuraya Al-Baq sami.



Final verdicts in Suu Kyi trial set for Friday

## Seventh body found after deadly Spain bus crash



KYIV: Local residents, dressed in traditional costumes, sing Christmas carols inside a metro station in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

## Moscow accuses Ukraine of deadly attack

### Russia's FSB security service claim to kill group of armed saboteurs from Ukraine

**MOSCOW:** Moscow said Monday it had foiled a new Ukrainian drone attack on a strategic bomber military base hundreds of kilometres from their joint border, as Kyiv called for Russia's ouster from the United Nations. Russia said it had downed the drone at Engels, a base for the country's strategic aircraft that Kyiv says have been used to strike Ukraine. Three servicemen were killed by falling debris, regional authorities said.

The same day, Russia's domestic security agency said it killed four Ukrainian "saboteurs", who allegedly attempted to enter Russia via a border region. Moscow has accused pro-Kyiv forces of targeting Russian military sites and civilian infrastructure, including blowing up a bridge linking annexed Crimea to Russia.

Russia's defence ministry said on Monday it downed a Ukrainian drone at its Engels airfield in the southern Saratov region located more than 600 kilometres (370 miles) from the border with Ukraine. It was the second attack on the Engels airfield in less than a month and the deepest strike into Russian territory since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on February 24.

In early December, the Russian defence ministry said Ukrainian drone attacks caused explosions at two airfields including Engels, leaving three dead. The airfields were targeted with Soviet-made drones, the ministry said at the time.

Separately, Russia's FSB security service claimed it had killed a group of armed saboteurs from Ukraine that attempted to cross into the Bryansk region carrying "improvised explosive devices". A video released by the FSB showed several bloodied bodies sprawled on the ground, wearing winter camouflage and carrying guns.

There was no immediate comment from Kyiv. The attacks came 10 months into Moscow's offensive in Ukraine where Russian troops have been battering the country's energy grid, leaving millions in the cold and dark in the middle of winter.

Ukraine on Monday urged the exclusion of Russia—a permanent member of the UN Security Council—from the world body. "Ukraine calls on the member states of the UN... to deprive the Russian Federation of its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and to

exclude it from the UN as a whole," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

#### 'Unite the Russian people'

"We have a very simple question: Does Russia have the right to remain a permanent member of the UN Security Council and to be in the United Nations at all?" Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Sunday.

"We have a convincing and reasoned answer—no, it does not." The five permanent members of the 15-seat Security Council have veto power that can block any resolution. Despite mounting human and material losses and growing international isolation, Russian President Vladimir Putin has showed no readiness to change tactics.

On Sunday, Putin said his assault on Ukraine aimed to "unite the Russian people", accusing his country's "geopolitical opponents (of) aiming to tear apart Russia, the historical Russia". The Kremlin chief has reiterated the concept of "historical Russia" to argue that Ukrainians and Russians were one people.

"Divide and conquer, that's what they have always sought to accomplish and are still seeking to do," Putin said in a television interview, referring to the West. "But our goal is different: it's to unite the Russian people."

He said that Moscow was ready to negotiate and appeared unfazed when asked about a new air defence system the United States will deliver to Ukraine. "Of course we will destroy it, 100 percent!" Putin said, referring to the Patriot missile battery promised to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Zelensky last week earned firm pledges of support from Washington during his first trip out of Ukraine since the conflict began—including the Pentagon's most advanced air defence system. Western military and financial aid has been crucial for Ukraine's pushback of Russian troops—including from the southern city of Kherson, the only regional capital that was held by Russia.

Despite Russia's retreat from the city, it remains within reach of Moscow's weaponry and under constant threat. —AFP

## Xi urges steps to 'protect' lives as China battles COVID

**BEIJING:** Chinese President Xi Jinping urged officials on Monday to take steps to protect lives in his first public remarks on COVID-19 since Beijing dramatically loosened hardline containment measures this month.

Having mostly cut itself off from the rest of the world during the pandemic, China is now experiencing the planet's biggest surge in infections after abruptly lifting restrictions that torpedoed the economy. Studies have estimated that around one million people could die over the next few months. Many in the population are now grappling with shortages of medicine, while emergency medical facilities are strained by an influx of

undervaccinated elderly patients.

"At present, COVID-19 prevention and control in China are facing a new situation and new tasks," Xi said in a directive, according to state broadcaster CCTV. "We should launch the patriotic health campaign in a more targeted way... fortify a community line of defence for epidemic prevention and control, and effectively protect people's lives, safety and health," Xi said.

Hospitals and crematoriums across the country have been overflowing with COVID patients and victims, while China's National Health Commission on Sunday announced it would stop publishing daily nationwide infection and death statistics.

The decision to scrap the daily virus count comes amid concerns that the country's blooming wave of infections is not being accurately reflected in official statistics. Beijing has admitted the scale of the outbreak has become "impossible" to track following the end of mandatory mass testing, as people are now not obliged to declare test results to authorities.

And last week, Beijing narrowed the criteria by

which COVID-19 fatalities were counted—a move experts said would suppress the number of deaths attributable to the virus. The winter surge comes ahead of two major public holidays next month, in which millions of migrant workers are expected to travel to their hometowns to reunite with relatives.

Authorities are bracing for the virus to hit under-resourced rural areas hard, and on Monday called for the guaranteed supply of drugs and medical treatment during New Year's Day and the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, which begins January 21.

The ruling Communist Party and State Council issued a notice calling on officials to "ensure the smooth and orderly adjustment and transition of epidemic prevention and control measures".

In recent days, health officials in the wealthy coastal province Zhejiang estimated that one million residents were being infected per day, while the coastal city of Qingdao predicted roughly 500,000 new daily infections and the southern manufacturing city of Dongguan eyed 250,000 to 300,000. —AFP



NANJING: This photo taken on December 25, 2022 shows people queuing to visit a makeshift night fever clinic in Nanjing, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. —AFP

## China deployed 71 warplanes in weekend war drills: Taiwan

**TAIPEI:** China deployed 71 warplanes in weekend military exercises around Taiwan, Taipei's defence ministry said Monday, including dozens of fighter jets in one of the biggest daily incursions to date. The People's Liberation Army said it had conducted a "strike drill" on Sunday in response to unspecified "provocations" and "collusion" between the United States and the self-ruled island.

Data from Taiwan's defence ministry showed those drills were one of the largest since they started releasing daily tallies. In a post on Twitter, Taiwan said 60 fighter jets took part in the drills, including six Su-30 warplanes, some of China's most advanced.

Moreover, 47 of the sorties crossed into the island's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), the third-highest daily incursion on record, according to AFP's database. Chiu Tai-san, head of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan's top China policy-making body, expressed "strong dissatisfaction" at the latest incursions during a parliament session on Monday.

Taiwan lives under constant threat of invasion by China, which claims the democratic island as part of its territory, to be taken one day. Beijing has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan under President Xi Jinping as relations have deteriorated.

One of the pressure tactics China has increasingly used is probing Taiwan's ADIZ with its warplanes. According to an AFP database, there have been more than 1,700 such incursions so far this year, compared with 969 in 2021. Taiwan's defence ministry said it recorded around 380 incursions in 2020.

China did not specify the number of aircraft mobilised for Sunday's exercises, nor the exact location of the manoeuvres. Taiwan's daily tally showed most of the incursions crossed the

"median line" which runs down the Taiwan Strait separating the two sides, while a smaller number went through Taiwan's south-western ADIZ.

#### Record bomber incursion

Many nations maintain air defence identification zones, including the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan and China. They are not the same as a country's airspace. Instead, they encompass a much wider area, in which any foreign aircraft is expected to announce itself to local aviation authorities.

Taiwan's ADIZ is much larger than its airspace. It overlaps part of China's ADIZ and even includes some of the mainland. The PLA said Sunday's exercises were "a firm response to the escalating collusion and provocations by the US and the Taiwanese authorities". Beijing has been incensed by US President Joe Biden's handling of Taiwan—especially after he said Washington would defend it militarily if attacked by China. Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday that cooperation between Taipei and Washington would "help (maintain) freedom, openness, peace and stability" in the Indo-Pacific region.

The prospect of a Chinese invasion has increasingly rattled both Western nations and many of China's neighbours. Xi, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, has said that the process of what he calls the "reunification" of Taiwan cannot be passed on to future generations. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also heightened fears China might try something similar. The United States has stepped up support for Taiwan including a bill this month that authorised \$10 billion in military aid, to which Beijing expressed "strong opposition".

Tensions peaked in August during US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan, with the PLA staging huge military drills around the island in protest. Military flights into the ADIZ are seen as a way to both wear down Taiwan's ageing fleet of fighters as well as probe its defensive responses.

There has also been an increase in sorties by China's nuclear-capable H-6 bombers. China this month sent a record 18 H-6 bombers into the southwestern ADIZ in the largest daily incursion to date. —AFP





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## International

# Paris shooting suspect appears before judge

## Kurdish community express anger at French security services

**PARIS:** A French pensioner suspected of fatally shooting three Kurds in Paris appeared before a judge who will decide on whether to charge him in the case that sparked angry protests. The 69-year-old has confessed to a "pathological" hatred for foreigners and spent nearly a day in a psychiatric facility before being returned to police custody on Sunday, authorities said.

The shooting at a Kurdish cultural centre and a nearby hairdressing salon on Friday sparked panic in the city's bustling 10th district, home to numerous shops and restaurants and a large Kurdish population.

Three others were wounded in the attack but none were in a life-threatening condition, with one out of hospital. The violence has revived the trauma of three unresolved murders of Kurds in 2013 that many blame on Turkey. Many in the Kurdish community have expressed anger at the French security services, saying they had done too little to prevent the shooting. The frustration boiled over on Saturday and furious demonstrators clashed with police in central Paris for a second day running after a tribute rally.

### History of violence

The suspect—named as William M. by French media—is a gun enthusiast with a history of

weapons offences who had been released on bail earlier this month. The retired train driver was convicted for armed violence in 2016 by a court in Seine-Saint-Denis, but appealed.

A year later he was convicted for illegally possessing a firearm. The suspect said he initially wanted to kill people in the northern Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, which has a large immigrant population.

But he changed his mind as few people were around and his clothing made it difficult for him to reload his weapon, the prosecutor said of the Friday shooting. He then returned to his parents' house before deciding to go to the 10th district instead.

Last year, he was charged with racist violence after allegedly stabbing migrants and slashing their tents with a sword in a park in eastern Paris. The prosecutor said no links with an extremist ideology were found following a search of his parents' home, a computer and a smartphone.

The suspect said he acquired his weapon four years ago from a member of a shooting club, hid it at his parents' house and had never used it before. Often described as the world's largest people without a state, the Kurds are a Muslim ethnic group spread across Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. —AFP



**PARIS:** Demonstrators hold portraits of victims of the Enghien Street shooting in Paris, and those of La Fayette street murders in 2013, as they take part in a march to pay tribute to them and in solidarity with the Kurdish community in Paris on December 26, 2022. —AFP

## Seventh body found after deadly Spain bus crash

**MADRID:** Rescuers found the body of a woman in Spain's northwestern Galicia region on Monday, raising to seven the number who died after a bus plunged into a river on Christmas Eve, police said.

The accident happened on Saturday as the bus was crossing a bridge over the Lerez river near Pedre village some 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Santiago de Compostela.

The regional La Voz de Galicia newspaper said the bus had plunged from a height of nearly 30 metres (nearly 100 feet) into the river. Rescuers located two survivors—the driver and a woman passenger—and found six bodies in searches that continued into Christmas Day, wrapping up rescue efforts in the evening after believing that everyone was accounted for.

But on Monday morning, they resume their search after the passenger who survived said a friend she had been travelling with was not on the list of victims, a Guardia Civil police spokesman said. "When the injured woman was able to speak, she told us she had been travelling with a friend and that they had been due to have dinner together," he said.

The woman hadn't been reported missing as nobody was waiting for her, he said. "We resumed the search today and the helicopter spotted her body in the river," he told AFP, saying efforts were under way to extract her



**COTOBADA:** The wreck of a bus lies in the Lerez river after it plunged while crossing a bridge, killing four people, in Cerededo-Cotobade, northwestern Spain, on December 25, 2022. —AFP

body. "In theory, there shouldn't be any more people missing." The alarm was initially raised by a passing driver who noticed a portion of the safety barrier over the bridge had disappeared, telling the emergency services he feared there had been an accident.

Rescuers then received a call from the bus, which helped them find the wreckage. But the search had to be suspended overnight due to bad weather, with heavy rain causing the level of the Lerez river to rise sharply.

Investigators are looking into the cause of the accident. "Weather conditions were very

bad that night," said Galician leader Alfonso Rueda after visiting the site of the accident. The Voz de Galicia newspaper said among those on board were people who had just visited loved ones at a prison in central Galicia.

The Guardia Civil said the bus driver, who survived, had tested negative for alcohol and drugs. He was released from hospital on Monday, local media said. Local officials said one of the victims was a young Peruvian woman who worked with elderly people. —AFP

## Eight dead in failed IS prison assault in Syria

**QAMISHLI:** Six members of Kurdish-led security forces and two jihadists were killed Monday in a failed Islamic State group assault near a prison for extremists in northern Syria, a war monitor said. The failed assault targeted a Kurdish security complex in Raqa, the group's former de facto capital in Syria, which includes a military intelligence prison housing jihadists, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"The jihadists were targeting the military intelligence prison" housing hundreds of jihadists, including 200 high-level militants, said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Britain-based monitor. Kurdish-led authorities announced a state of emergency in Raqa and have put the city on lockdown as security forces hunt down jihadists at large.

IS claimed responsibility for the attack, saying two of its fighters had launched it, one of whom had escaped. The group said the attack came to avenge "Muslim prisoners" and female relatives of jihadists living in the Kurdish-administered Al-Hol camp.

Al-Hol, home to more than 50,000 people, is the largest camp for displaced people who fled after the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) led the battle that dislodged IS group fighters from the last scraps of their Syrian territory in 2019.

The spokesperson of the SDF, which controls Raqa and Al-Hol, confirmed the death of six security forces to AFP. The assault was near a prison with IS inmates, he said, but "IS failed to attack the prison because our forces thwarted their attack", Farhad Shami said.

Security forces are still searching the area to arrest members of the cell, he added. This is the most significant jihadist attack on a prison since IS fighters launched their biggest assault in years in January, when they attacked the Ghwayran prison in the Kurdish-controlled city of Hasakeh.

Hundreds were killed in the assault that lasted for a week and aimed to free fellow jihadists. Syria's war, which broke out in 2011, has killed close to half a million people and spurred the largest conflict-induced displacement since World War II. —AFP

## Historic blizzard leaves nearly 50...

Continued from Page 1

in addition to the several feet that have already left the city marooned, with a virtual collapse of emergency services.

The blizzard has stubbornly refused to release its grip on western New York's Erie County, where Buffalo is located and which has become the epicenter of the crisis. "In addition to the 13 confirmed deaths yesterday, the Erie County Department of Health medical examiner's office has confirmed an additional 12 deaths, bringing the total for the blizzard to 25 deaths county-wide," Erie County executive Mark Poloncarz said in a press briefing.

The ferocious weather makes this "the worst storm probably in our lifetime, and the history of the city," Poloncarz said, noting the death toll in Erie will likely surpass that of Buffalo's infamous blizzard of 1977, when nearly 30 people died. With more snow in the forecast and most of Buffalo "impassable," he

warned residents to bunker down and stay in place. "This is not the end yet, we are not there," he said.

National Guard members and other teams have rescued hundreds of people from snow-covered cars and homes without electricity, but authorities have said more people remain trapped. New York Governor Kathy Hochul, a native of Buffalo, said she was stunned by what she saw during a Sunday reconnaissance tour of the city. "It is (like) going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking," Hochul said, describing eight-foot (2.4-m) snow drifts against homes and how power outages made for life-threatening conditions. "This is a war with mother nature," she said.

The extreme weather sent wind chill temperatures in all 48 contiguous US states below freezing over the weekend. At one point on Saturday, nearly 1.7 million customers were without electricity in the biting cold, according to tracker poweroutage.us. That number has dropped substantially, although there were still some 50,000 without electricity Monday morning on the US east coast. Due to frozen electric substations, some Erie County residents were not expected to regain power until Tuesday, with one substation reportedly buried under 18 feet of snow, a senior county official said. —AFP

Jimenez and Tudela.

The coastguard also said strong winds and big waves sank a fishing boat on Christmas Day off the coast of the central island of Leyte. Two crew members were killed, while six others were rescued. Two others, including a baby girl, drowned in the eastern towns of Libmanan and Tinambac after they were hit by floods several days before Christmas, the civil defense office said.

The coastguard said it also rescued 23 fishermen aboard two boats that capsized when hit by big waves off the southern city of Zamboanga on Sunday. Nineteen people remain missing, most of them subsistence fishermen from the country's Pacific seaboard who went to sea despite rough conditions. The weather turned bad as the disaster-prone nation of 110 million people prepared for a long Christmas holiday. Millions of people travel to their hometowns for family reunions during this period. The Philippines is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change. Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer. —AFP

## Floods force Filipinos to...

Continued from Page 1

added. "The waters rose above the chest in some areas, but today the rains have ceased," civil defense worker Robinson Lacre told AFP by phone from Gingoog city, which accounted for 33,000 of the 45,700 people evacuated from their homes.

The coastguard said it rescued members of more than two dozen families in Ozamiz and nearby Clarin town at the height of the flooding. Photos released by the coastguard showed its orange-clad rescuers cradling toddlers plucked from homes at nighttime in waist-deep floodwaters. Seven deaths - mostly from drowning - were reported in Clarin and the nearby southern towns of



**KABUL:** An Afghan man walks past the office of a foreign aid group 'Care' in downtown Kabul on Dec 26, 2022. —AFP

## More NGOs halt work as Taliban ban women staff

**KABUL:** Christian Aid and ActionAid on Monday became the latest foreign aid groups to suspend operations in Afghanistan after the country's Taliban rulers ordered all NGOs to stop women staff from working. Announcements by the two groups take to six the number of bodies who have paused their operations in the country.

Christian Aid was "rapidly seeking clarity... and urging the authorities to reverse the ban", head of global programs Ray Hasan said in a statement. "Whilst we do this, we are unfortunately pausing the work of our programs," he added.

ActionAid said that if women were banned from working with the group it would "prevent us from reaching out to half of the population that are already

reeling from hunger". "ActionAid has made the difficult decision to temporarily halt most of its programs in Afghanistan until a clearer picture emerges," it said in a statement.

On Sunday Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE all announced they were putting their operations on hold. The International Rescue Committee, which provides emergency response in health, education and other areas and employs 3,000 women across Afghanistan, also said it was suspending services.

"Millions of people in Afghanistan are on the verge of starvation," Christian Aid's Hasan said on Monday. "Reports that families are so desperate they have been forced to sell their children to buy food are utterly heartbreaking," he said, adding that a ban on women aid workers would "only curtail our ability to help the growing number of people in need".

The ban is the latest blow against women's rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban reclaimed power last year. Less than a week ago, the hardline Islamists also barred women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities. —AFP



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2022

# Business

## Turkey remains preferred tourism destination for Kuwaitis and expats

### Airfares jump as holiday season begins

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** With the advent of the travel season of Christmas and New Year, many expats and citizens in Kuwait are booking flights for tourism or visiting their relatives. Airfares have witnessed an increase, especially for countries with large communities of low-wage workers in Kuwait, while touristic destinations have maintained the same prices compared to holiday periods before the pandemic.

Khalid Al-Jundi, a ticketing agent at a travel and tourism agency, told Kuwait Times that Turkey ranks first among touristic destinations for Kuwaitis and expats during this holiday, despite prices witnessing a great increase from the previous period. Currently, prices of tickets to Turkey cost KD 120 to KD 150, up from KD 70 to KD 80.

Jundi explained that people in Kuwait prefer Turkey due to the quick visa process, as it takes only a week to get it. The UK, Georgia, UAE, Egypt and France are among the touristic destinations that both Kuwaitis and expats prefer to travel to. But prices of tickets to Britain are high compared to the period before the pandemic. Jundi said the price of an indirect return ticket to the UK during this holiday starts from KD 320, while for direct flights airfares exceed KD 400 to KD 500 per person.

When Kuwait Times asked about the most popular destinations among working classes, Jundi said Manila tops the list, as prices for one-way ticket reached KD 300, despite prices before the holiday being KD 130. He pointed out the prices of working-class destinations witnessed a decrease compared to the period before the pandemic, mentioning airfares to Egypt in 2018 and 2019



Istanbul in Turkey remains the most preferred tourism destination for Kuwaitis as well as expatriates.

were between KD 140 and KD 150, while after the pandemic they did not exceed KD 75 to KD 80 per person.

He referred the reason to the great demand from low-wage workers travelling after the pandemic, as they suffered from weak wages during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, Egypt, India and Nepal ranked second, third and fourth among most popular destinations during the current holiday travel season.

### Saudi, Japan sign deals to boost energy cooperation

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia and Japan have signed new agreements on energy co-operation, extending the partnership of two of the world's major economies. The agreements primarily focus on the areas of the circular carbon economy and carbon recycling, as well as green hydrogen, fuel ammonia and derivatives, state-owned Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said on Monday. Both sides stressed the importance of ensuring global oil markets remain stable through continued collaboration between oil-producing and consuming countries, it said.

The agreements were signed by Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, and Nishimura Yasutoshi, Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, during the first ministerial meeting of the Japan-Saudi Energy Ministerial Dialogue in Riyadh. The two countries

"highlighted the need to ensure secure supplies of all energy sources in global markets, noting that the kingdom continues to be Japan's largest source of reliable crude oil supplies and its reliable and trusted partner", the SPA said. "In order to realize a carbon-neutral society, it is necessary to focus on emissions rather than energy source through effective deployment of the carbon circular economy and carbon recycling technologies," it added.

Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's biggest economy and the world's top oil exporter, has continuously played a leading role in the global energy sector and promoted sustainable practices, such as the circular carbon economy. A circular carbon economy is a framework for managing and reducing emissions, using a closed-loop system involving the so-called 'four Rs' - reduce, reuse, recycle and remove, said Saudi Aramco, the world's biggest oil exporter.

A circular economy, in general, is an economic system that focuses on reducing the extraction of natural resources, minimizing waste and regenerating natural systems. Raw materials, components and products keep their value for as long as possible, while renewable energy sources are used in a circular economy. The kingdom aims to develop

a "closed loop system", which will help restore carbon balance and contribute to global economic growth in a sustainable manner, Prince Abdulaziz said in October. Carbon recycling, meanwhile, is the process of suppressing emissions and repurposing them for the creation of other materials and even fuels. The technology is not expected to be widespread until 2030, said the International Energy Agency, citing Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Saudi Arabia counts Japan, the world's third-largest economy, as a key partner as it boosts its focus on the East. The Asian nation imports about 90 per cent of its energy and is the world's top importer of liquefied natural gas this year, data from Statista shows.

State-owned Aramco accounts for about 40 per cent of Japan's total crude oil imports, the company's website said. More than 60 per cent of the company's shipments go to Asia, with China, Japan, South Korea and India being the biggest buyers. Japan is also Saudi Arabia's third-biggest trading partner, with exports worth 39.1 billion Saudi riyals (\$10.4 billion) as of the second quarter of 2022, trailing India and China, latest government data says. —Agencies

### Bahrain's first u-turn flyover is now open

**MANAMA:** Sunday, 25th December, saw the official opening of Bahrain's first U-turn flyover, which marked the end of the first stage of a massive multi-million dinar renovation of a major highway in the core of the capital. The Bahrain Al-Fateh Highway Upgrade Project was funded by the Saudi Fund for Development and included the opening of a flyover as part of the government's commitment to keep developing the country's infrastructure.

Currently, 87,000 vehicles pass along the crucial roadway each day as it connects populated places

including Juffair, Ghuraifa, Adliya, Gudaibiya, Umm Al-Hassam, and Mina Salman. The capacity would rise to 140,000 cars per day after the proposed upgrade is accomplished.

"Opening the new U-turn is the first phase in the implementation of the comprehensive revamp project for Al-Fateh Highway - which links several key development projects in Bahrain," said Ebrahim Hassan Al-Hawaj, minister of works on Sunday. "Al-Fateh Highway expansion is one of the important strategic projects that are within the implementation of the government action plan. It will provide high-quality standards for sustainable growth while meeting the current and future needs of Bahrain. It will also contribute to attracting more investments, which will revitalize the economic sectors," added Al-Hawaj.



Bahrain's first U-turn flyover is open now.

The u-turn will primarily benefit traffic heading from Juffair via the Prince Saud Al-Faisal Highway to the Al-Fateh Highway southward towards Mina Salman, as well as

traffic moving west to Shaikh Duaij Avenue. A tentative completion date of March 2024 has been set for one of the biggest road construction projects in the country. —Agencies

### Lebanon inflation rate increases 189% in first 11 months

**BEIRUT:** Inflation in Lebanon increased an average 189.4 per cent in the first 11 months of 2022, from the same period a year earlier, according to data from the Central Administration of Statistics.

Hyperinflation continued for the 29th consecutive month, rising annually to about 142.4 per cent in November from the same month a year earlier, the administration's Consumer Price Index showed. The CPI increased about 3.74 per cent from October

2022. Lebanon is expected to post the second-highest inflation rate in the world this year, behind Sudan, according to Fitch Solutions.

The country is in the grip of an economic crisis described by the World Bank as one of the worst in modern history and has yet to enforce critical structural and financial reforms required to unlock \$3 billion of assistance from the International Monetary Fund. Reforms hinge on the formation of a new government, the election of a president and consensus among the country's political elite.

Politicians are deadlocked over the formation of a new cabinet seven months after parliamentary elections were held and after the six-year term of former president Michel Aoun expired at the end of October. Political impasses have led to political vacuums in the country in the past and stalled its economic progress.

economic progress.

Lebanon was without a president for two and a half years until Mr Aoun's election by the 128-seat parliament in 2016. His predecessor, Michel Sleiman, was elected in 2008 after the position had been vacant for 18 months. Securing IMF backing will help to unlock a further \$11 billion of assistance that was pledged at a Paris donor conference in 2018, which is also tied to a string of reforms.

Lebanon's economy collapsed after it defaulted on about \$31 billion of eurobonds in March 2020, with its currency losing more than 90 per cent against the dollar on the black market. According to the latest CPI reading, the price of miscellaneous goods and services in November increased fivefold while the cost of water, electricity, gas and other fuels rose more than four times. —Agencies

Plan for your future retirement  
with KFH investment plans

THIMAR  
Retirement Investment Plan

### KFH offers 'Thimar' investment plan for future retirement

**KUWAIT:** Considering its pioneering role in offering unique solutions and innovative products, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has continued its distinction in fulfilling customers' aspirations and providing the best investment plans and solutions according to the highest international standards.

KFH is keen to meet the customers' desires to achieve a secure life after the hard work for many years. KFH offers the harvest of the fruits, through "Thimar" plan, so that the customer can enjoy a comfortable retirement life worthy of his life journey. Among the conditions of the investment plan is that the customer's age is between 21 and 55 years. The investment period ranges from 5 years to 39 years. The investment plan "Thimar" advantages include the following: the investment amount or monthly payments may be amended at any time and the amounts shall be automatically transferred on monthly basis from the customer account to the flexible investment plan "Thimar" account. Also, the customer can withdraw 60 percent of the balance in the first year and 60 percent every year after the first withdrawal.

The customer can automatically increase the monthly investment amount once every two years. It is possible to deposit specific financial payments in addition to the monthly deductions without affecting the schedule of the investment plan. The saving amount and accrued profit during the investment period shall fall due upon expiration of the investment plan. The investment plan can be cancelled at any time and the invested amount and profits accrued on the date of closing shall be refunded to the customer. Long-term investment plans provided by "KFH" encourage and inspire customers to enhance future planning and saving culture, determine family spending priorities and enhance chances of increasing family income through innovative and flexible solutions with rewarding investment returns.



Business



BOADILLA DEL MONTE : An employee of the company EngelSolar holds a solar panel in Boadilla del Monte near Madrid.—AFP



POZUELO DE ALARCON : Paloma Utrera Martinez, 50 years old, poses during an interview at her home in Pozuelo de Alarcon near Madrid.—AFP

# Spaniards snap up solar panels amid worsening energy crisis

## Rooftop solar panels can meet up to 80% of household electricity needs

**MADRID:** Demand for solar panels has shot up to unprecedented levels in Spain as Europe's energy crisis shows no sign of letting up, in a welcome boost for a sector with huge potential. "Here we have sun almost all year round," said Paloma Utrera showing off the black panels installed on her roof in Pozuelo de Alarcon, a well-heeled suburb of western Madrid.

"We need to make the most of it." Like many Spaniards in recent months, Utrera has started producing her own electricity after installing 13 photovoltaic panels on her roof with a total output of 4.5 kilowatts. "It's not cheap" but with the help of EU and government subsidies, "the savings we'll make on the electricity bill, the investment isn't that bad," she said. The 50-year-old airline industry employee said she's halved her electricity bills since having the solar panels installed in September. "It's a really worthwhile investment," said Utrera.

According to Engel Solar, which carried out the installation, rooftop solar panels can generate between 50 and 80 percent of the average household's electricity needs. And given the current prices of electricity, that makes for an "interesting" proposal, said Engel Solar commercial director Joaquin Gasca. Set up in Barcelona in 2005, the company with 200 employees has seen its turnover soar fivefold over the past two years and expects to see a further jump in 2023. "The phone just never stops ringing, it's crazy," said Gasca.

### A rooftop investment

And it's not just individuals. Businesses and public entities are also getting on board, driven not only by



BOADILLA DEL MONTE : Employees of the company EngelSolar hold a solar panel for installation in Boadilla del Monte near Madrid.—AFP

the energy crisis linked to the war in Ukraine but also encouraged by the public funding available through the EU's vast COVID recovery plan. All of this has given an unprecedented boost to rooftop solar in the Iberian peninsula. "Until about a year ago, if you looked at the rooves in your town or city, you would hardly see any solar panels for self-generation... but that's totally different now," said Francisco Valverde, a renewable energy specialist at Menta Energia consultancy. Jose Donoso, head of Spanish solar power lobby UNEF which groups some 780 businesses, agreed.

"People are seeing how their neighbors are putting in self-generating installations, that they're happy with

them and are saving money, so they themselves are encouraged to get solar panels," he told AFP. UNEF says the installed rooftop solar capacity should exceed two gigawatts this year, a figure more than three times higher than in 2020. Solar power has become "very competitive" with a cost that is "90 percent lower than what it was 14 years ago," Donoso said.

"People have started realizing that their money is better off invested in their rooftops rather than sitting in the bank."

### Democratizing energy

For the photovoltaics industry, this resurgence of

interest is a welcome development after years in which the sector was left to languish. As Europe's sunniest country, Spain was one of the leaders in solar power at the start of the century until the 2008 financial crisis halted the boom.

Since then, it has fallen behind neighbors. A right-wing government threw shade on the sector by cutting subsidies. It then introducing a tax on households that sold excess electricity to the national grid, a move derided by critics as a "tax on the sun".

But the tax-which NGOs say was imposed following pressure from energy giants worried about competition from self-generated electricity-was shelved in 2018 when the left came to power and stepped up support for renewable energy.

Since then, the sector has grown rapidly. Self-generation "democratizes energy and takes control away from the big energy corporations that want to retain their hold on power," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said at the end of October. He predicted between nine to 14 gigawatts of new rooftop solar by 2030, out of a total of nearly 40 gigawatts of new solar power.

In spite of its vast potential, solar energy last year supplied just 9.9 percent of Spain's electricity-far behind the 23.3 percent generated by wind power, the 20.8 percent provided by nuclear power or the 20.8 percent contributed by natural gas power stations.

Today only "four or five percent" of Spanish homes have solar panels installed, "meaning there is a lot of room for growth," said Gasca. It has the potential to be "the leading source of energy" in the Iberian peninsula, he added.—AFP

## Kyrgyzstan's coal mines dig on in hope of past glory

**SULUKTU, Kyrgyzstan:** Hundreds of metres underground, Emylбек Umarov hacks out lumps of coal by hand with a pickaxe in a dank mine in a remote mountainous corner of Kyrgyzstan. Coal may be falling out of favor elsewhere because of climate change, but Suluktu's mines hope growing demand from neighboring Central Asian countries and beyond will help them return to their Soviet heyday.

For some, like Umarov, the mine is one of the few places offering work-despite the threat of accidents that have killed dozens of people in the area in recent years. "It's terrifying, it's tough, but there's no other work here," said the 27-year-old, who has two degrees in computing and economics.

As he spoke, the coughing of miners with blackened faces echoed through the tunnels illuminated by a few lamps hanging from a ceiling dripping with water. The men work with jackhammers, pickaxes and explosives on 12-hour shifts day or night 15 days a month for a monthly salary of less than 150 euros (\$160). Before starting their shifts, they have to travel an hour to the mine in large Russian-made Kamaz trucks along a badly rutted road. The hulks of Soviet-era machinery can be seen in the pinkish dawn.

### 'We were proud'

Tucked away in the mountains, the town of Suluktu was founded in 1868 and is one of the oldest coal extraction hubs in Central Asia. From the "miner's bread" on sale in local bakeries to the local football team called "Shakhtar" (Miner) — everything in the

town is a reminder of its main industry, including the coal dust coating the ground. Suluktu "heated Central Asia during Soviet times", said its mayor, Maksat Kadyrkulov. Like settlements across the former Soviet Union, it suffered from deindustrialization after its collapse, leading to a sharp drop in population and coal output.

"There is no farmland here. We just dig coal and there is no family without a miner," Kadyrkulov said. The mayor said he hoped Suluktu would recover its "past glory" thanks to growing demand for coal. The Soviet era is a constant presence in the town. On its outskirts stands a monument depicting two miners with a four-meter-high hammer and sickle.

### 'Everything by hand'

Trucks filled with coal file past the statues on their way to deliver their cargo to Uzbekistan and beyond since access to nearby Tajikistan is now closed off because of a flare-up of tensions along the border. A mosaic nearby extols the glory of Soviet power, showing a miner with a red star behind him. Before "we were proud to be miners", said 64-year-old Nimadjan Abdulayevich, who spent 37 years in the mines, his voice hoarse from throat cancer. While there have been no fatal accidents in the mine where Umarov works, the risk is constant.

"The mine is like a second front. You risk dying there," is a phrase that miners often repeat. Last year, the metal bars holding up the vein where Umarov was working collapsed, breaking his leg.

"Since then, the fear remains," he said. His father Dzhumbai, who now works on the surface as a welder, was caught up in a similar accident. Mine director Kanynbek Ismailov said he lacked the resources for new equipment, even though the conditions in the mine are among the best of the 40 or so in Suluktu. "We do everything by hand. We do not have new equipment," Ismailov said.—AFP



SULUKTU : Workers stack bags of coal at the Suluktu sorting base, some 1100 km from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Nestled in the foothills of mountain ranges, the city of Suluktu, founded in 1868, is one of the oldest coal mining centers in Central Asia.—AFP



CAIRO: Egypt's first luxury Talgo train has begun its service.

## Egypt to charge tourists in dollars, euros for train tickets

**CAIRO:** Tourists visiting Egypt will have to pay for train tickets in foreign currencies from January, according to the country's transport minister. During a televised phone-in to a popular talk show, Kamel Al-Wazir said there has been an increase in demand for train tickets among tourists in the past few weeks, with more than 1,000 paying in a foreign currency for the trips.

Foreign currency procured by the transport ministry will be used to pay back loans taken out by the ministry to purchase new trains for Egypt's railway authority, Al-Wazir said. The main aim of the new decision is to reduce the financial burden on Egypt's central bank, which has seen its foreign reserves dwindle to record lows this year amid rising demand for dollars used to clear shipments of goods held up at the nation's ports.

The minister said he was optimistic that it would be a successful channel for collecting foreign currency. On Saturday, Al-Wazir joined the first trip from Cairo to Alexandria made by the national railway authority's new luxury Talgo trains, which, according to the transport ministry, are the best in the country. Two of seven Talgo trains have arrived in Egypt, the manufacturer said, adding that it signed a contract with Egypt's transport ministry worth \$280 million (\$298 million), which includes supplying the seven trains in addition to offering 15

years of maintenance services. The trains are the fastest in Egypt's fleet, with a maximum speed of 160kph. They are equipped with an advanced shock absorption mechanism that will make the journey more comfortable for passengers, Al-Wazir said. Tickets for the new train, which only includes first and second-class cars, will cost 200 Egyptian pounds (\$8) for first-class tickets and 150 (\$6) for second-class.

The ministry said it intends to overhaul the country's railways by 2024 so they are "entirely brand new". Egypt's railways have been in severe disrepair for years with fatal accidents being quite common - including three this year. Al-Wazir said the country's railways have undergone a number of updates in recent weeks, including the installation of new electronically-controlled boom gates in lieu of their human-operated predecessors, who have been the cause of a number of accidents caused by cars crossing into the path of passing trains. Egypt's economy has been reeling from the ongoing shortage of dollars needed to operate its import-heavy economy. Following the departure of more than \$20 billion in foreign currency from investors earlier this year, Egypt's banks and finance ministry have implemented a number of restrictive policies aimed at keeping dollars at home. The measures include limits on how much foreign currency travelers can leave the country with in addition to higher tolls on ATM withdrawals of foreign currency by Egyptians abroad.

Earlier this month, the country's finance minister implemented a new measure requiring travelers to disclose how much cash they are carrying when entering the country.—Agencies

## Business

# Rail strikes hamper shoppers as Boxing Day sales expected to fall

## Britain's railways to remain closed for second consecutive day

LONDON: Rail strikes across the UK are expected to impede shoppers on the hunt for bargains in Boxing Day sales. Hundreds of train departures usually run on December 26 following the Christmas Day shutdown. But due to industrial action by rail workers this year, retailers are expected to feel the pinch. While some shoppers may choose to stay at home and snap up bargains online, the lack of public transport is likely to mean more products are left on shelves.

Network Rail said Britain's railways will remain closed for a second consecutive day due to a walk-out by employees who are members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT).

The AA said it expects 15.2 million cars on British roads on Monday, one of the busiest shopping days of the year. "Traffic is likely to build around shopping centers as lots of people seek a bargain in the sales, meanwhile football fans will travel to see their teams," an AA spokesman said. "There is scope for localized traffic congestion and more short trips, but traffic should be dispersed throughout the day as people take their time after Christmas Day." The strikes are the latest round of walkouts in a long-running dispute between union bosses and the government over pay, conditions and jobs.

Members of the public were last week warned about significant disruption to Christmas travel.

Airport transfers such as the Heathrow Express and Stansted Express are usually among the most popular services on Boxing Day, but airline passengers will be forced to find other ways of getting to and from Britain's airports.

Coach operators National Express and Megabus have experienced strong demand. The RMT strikes will be felt by travelers across the UK, shutting down Merseyrail services across Merseyside among others.

ScotRail has historically operated a Boxing Day service in the Strathclyde area. The operator also ran its first Boxing Day trains between Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Queen Street via Falkirk High in 2021. Northern Rail operated a service between Liverpool Lime Street and St Helens Central on Boxing Day last year.

Southern also served several routes on that day, connecting London Bridge with locations such as Brighton, Crystal Palace and East Croydon. The cost of living crisis is also tipped to noticeably affect Boxing Day sales, with shoppers expected to spend 4 per cent less on Monday and during the post-Christmas period, data shows. Research by Barclaycard Payments found that the average shopper intends to buy £229 (\$243) worth of items in the post-Christmas sales period, a reduction of £18 compared with 2021. —Agencies



LONDON: Industrial action by British rail workers are seen impacting the retailers this season.

## Sideup boosting E-commerce ecosystem

CAIRO: Egyptian entrepreneur Waleed Rashed, founder of Sideup - a Cairo-based technology start-up is helping e-commerce businesses to achieve scale and boost revenue using technology. Set up in 2019, Sideup, previously known as Voo, expanded its business model after rebranding.

It has since morphed into a one-stop shop that offers e-commerce solutions such as online payment gateways, marketing and business advisory services, and integration applications for sectors that include logistics, shipping and warehousing. With Sideup, businesses have access to various e-commerce services and technology solutions, and can organize different tasks on a single platform. By helping business owners to solve challenges around these areas, the company allows them to focus on their core mission.

"The logistics space has a lot of challenges and we are on a mission to solve them ... businesses don't have a single place to access multiple courier providers and it led us to create Voo, which was initially a courier marketplace for the e-commerce sector," Rashed, 39, said.

"The e-commerce sector is extremely fragmented for small businesses. You could either join a big platform [as a seller] and lose revenue to fees and commissions, or you could go alone and struggle to get access to services," Rashed says.

"We had the initial advantage of having a strong courier marketplace business [Voo], with clients who needed additional services." The company aims to empower micro, small and medium businesses, especially those selling products and services from remote locations such as villages or rural areas, or over social networking platforms and messaging apps. "We intend to help entrepreneurs who have the potential but do not have enough resources or access to the infrastructure of large service providers," Rashed says.

"Even our name comes from the fact that we work side-by-side with our partners and our customers ... to help them easily access whatever service they need to help their business grow up." With Sideup, e-commerce business owners simply need to choose what they need, and the start-up's account managers work with them to ensure "industry-leading service delivery," said Rashed.

Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country, is banking on technology and its start-up ecosystem to diversify its economy. Venture capital funding in Egypt more than doubled to \$307 million in the first half of 2022 from a year earlier, ranking it third in the Middle East and North Africa region, according to start-up data platform Magnitt.

The number of deals in the country grew by 22 per cent annually to 78 during the first six months of the year. The e-commerce market in Egypt comes with its own challenges as it is booming. However, Sideup is committed to sticking to the sector and providing solutions.

"The e-commerce industry is still very uneven in our region, with a number of challenges yet to be solved ... large players take off huge commissions from the margins of small businesses," Mr Rashed says. Egyptian e-commerce revenue is expected to grow at an annual rate of more than 18 per cent to \$15.76 billion by 2027, from \$6.85 billion this year, according to Statista.

In the e-commerce market, the number of Egyptian users is expected to jump to 84 million by 2027, with the average revenue per user set to reach \$122.90. Rashed, who founded the company using his own funds, says it gave him the freedom to experiment with his own "disruptive ideas that eventually helped to build a fundamentally strong business". Earlier this month, Sideup raised \$1.2 million in funding to drive plans to expand into Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's biggest economy. Various global and regional investors took part in the funding round, including Launch Africa VC, 500 Global, Riyadh Angels, Alex Angels, Al-Tuwajjri Fund and Saudi angel investor Faisal Al-Abdulsalam, the start-up says. —Agencies

## London's property market cools amid demand decline

LONDON: The number of Londoners looking to move outside the capital city has fallen over the past year, according to a new study. Research by the UK estate agent group Hamptons shows Londoners will have purchased 81,200 properties outside the capital this year, nearly 20,000 fewer than last year.

In 2022, Londoners bought 7.3 per cent of all homes sold in regions outside the capital, down from a 14-year high of 7.8 per cent last year. Nonetheless, the 2022 figure is still higher than in 2019, when 6.8 per cent of homes outside of London were bought by Londoners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Londoners worked from home, which sparked some to move outside the capital. The logic was, if I can do my job remotely, why not move out of my high-priced London home into somewhere cheaper - and often larger - and pocket the difference?

While the figures from Hamptons show that this is still going on, the trend seems to have peaked. Aneisha Beveridge, head of research at Hamptons, said: "London outmigration appears to have passed its peak. While 2021 was dominated by space seekers swapping the bright city lights for pastures green, 2022 signaled the return to the office. That said, the widespread popularity of flexible working has meant that Londoners continue to move that little bit further out of the city to gain more space, meaning outmigration numbers remain higher than pre-COVID times."

Even though the peak seems to have been passed, Hamptons contends that what is driving some, especially first-time buyers, out of London is affordability. With rising interest rates and high inflation, first-time buyers based in London are increasingly looking further afield. Affordability

meant that first-time buyers made up a record 28 per cent of those purchasing outside London.

Also, Londoners who made a permanent move out of the capital bought 62,210 homes this year, a fall of 23 per cent on last year, but still 8 per cent higher than in 2019. "Next year, we expect the pace of London outmigration to cool further as pent-up demand from the COVID related trend wanes," Beveridge said. "But affordability pressures, and in particular the cost of higher interest rates, may mean that more Londoners are forced to move further afield to buy a home. Our latest data suggests that first-time buyers in particular are sacrificing location in order to climb on to the housing ladder. And this looks set to put a floor under London outmigration numbers in 2023."

The property website, Zoopla, also sees the search for space in the UK's rural and coastal areas as finally "running out of steam". "The pandemic saw people moving from urban areas in a 'search for space', afforded by the onset of more flexible hybrid working and a big increase in retirement by older workers," said Zoopla's latest House Price Index. "Many buyers relocated to rural and coastal areas across the UK, pushing up house prices in the South-west, Wales, Kent and Norfolk."

For Richard Donnell, executive director at Zoopla, the increase in the number of Londoners that moved out of the capital during the pandemic was really just a blip and now the market is returning to normal.

"London's housing market has got bigger as a result of the pandemic, in that people can now work in London two or three days a week, but actually live further afield," he told The National. "So, it eases some of the pressure on the old London housing market, which went out to the M25. That means that prices won't go up, even if people came back, because they wouldn't have to come back in the middle of London."

Figures from Zoopla show the pent-up demand that was prevalent during the pandemic is now fading, with many coastal and rural towns this year recording a greater slowdown in demand and sales



LONDON: In 2022, Londoners bought 7.3 per cent of all homes sold in regions outside the capital, down from a 14-year high of 7.8 per cent last year.

than other areas nationally. But this doesn't point to a mad rush back into city-centre living. What's happening is a spread of the urban housing markets, which means that the gradient between house prices in inner cities and the suburbs and further out is flattening, as the daily commute becomes increasingly less desirable and more sidelined in the face of changing working patterns.

"You've loosened the ties between where you work and where you live," Donnell said. "So, every housing market in the UK has got that bit bigger and that eases the pressure on the core urban area, in that people can live further afield, Zoom calls are acceptable and you don't need to be in the office five days a week. Also, employers are required to be a lot more flexible towards employees in what's a tight labor market." Data from the estate agents Knight Frank shows that between the July and September of 2020 and the same three months this year, completed house sales rose by 10 per cent in the UK's cities, but fell by 8 per cent in the rural areas. "After a frenetic period for the country market, city living has come back strongly as workers have returned to the office, and the lifting of pandemic restrictions have boosted the appeal of urban living," said Chris Druce, senior research analyst at Knight Frank. —Agencies

## Huawei Ads is now Petal Ads

KUWAIT: We are excited to announce the next chapter for Huawei Ads platform. Starting in December, Huawei Ads will become Petal Ads. Since 2017, we have worked closely with advertising, media and publishing partners to create an expansive ads ecosystem.

Together, we have grown Huawei Ads into a vibrant marketplace with 4 billion daily ad requests and integrated over 360,000 global publishers. We are proud of how the platform has grown and evolved to serve customers beyond Huawei devices. We feel now is the right time to reflect the growth of the ecosystem and begin a new era as Petal Ads. We'd like to thank all our partners for their valuable support and look forward to growing the platform together in 2023.

Innovation is part of the DNA of all Petal products. Over the last few years, services such as Petal Search, Petal Maps and Petal Clip have brought more choice and open capabilities to the European market. We will be taking all of those technical advances in AI powered mobile search, location-based services and creative editing tools to further power the growth of the Petal Ads platform.

While 'Petal' can be seen as strong symbol for growth, it is also a symbol for rejuvenation. We are

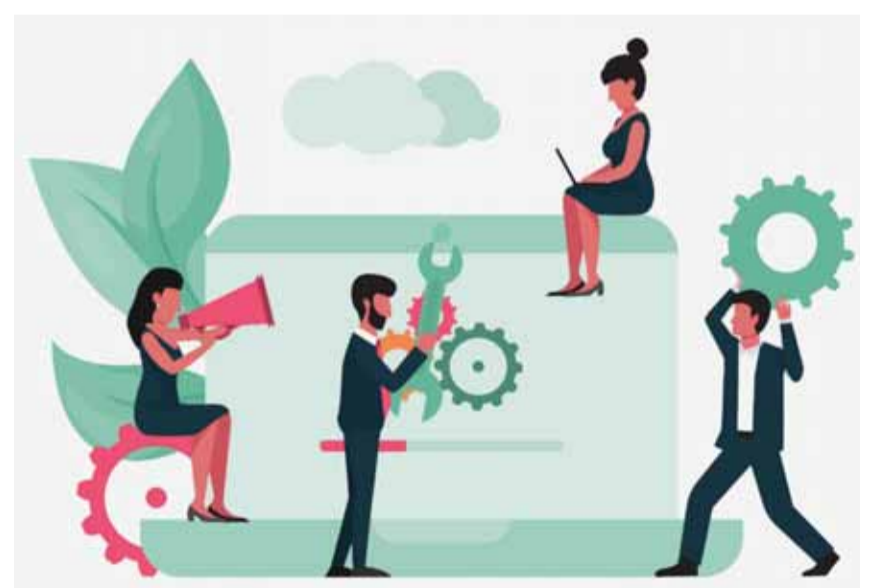
committed to leading the way in sustainability in digital advertising. By leveraging our learnings in all-scenario products & experiences, we hope to work alongside our partners to build an ecosystem where revenue growth and sustainability go hand in hand.

### 2023 will see a new era for Petal Ads

Today we are surrounded by change. Consumers are shifting the way they search for information online, with mobile virtual assistants playing an increasingly important role in how people and businesses connect. Advances in big data, AR and machine learning are giving advertisers powerful tools to engage their audiences across devices. Through all this innovation and change, protecting the safety and security of our customers and partners remains our top priority.

Like the petals of a flower, it is only when all sides of the advertising ecosystem come together in perfect harmony, that something special emerges. Our mission for Petal Ads, is to be a connector in a sea of possibility. By working together with media partners, publishers, advertisers, MMPs and Industry bodies, we will continue to bring innovative ad experiences to all smart device users around the world.

We build quality ad experiences using first party data to deliver better experiences for customers and efficient results for partners.



### Innovation

We create innovative ad experiences by combining our hardware capabilities with our strengths in AI and cloud technology.

### Growth

We help our partners to grow with monetization opportunities for publishers and sustainable advertising solutions for businesses.

Petal Ads - an advertising marketplace continues to be a driving force in the e-commerce world, proving its capabilities to support online apps and help them achieve their marketing campaign objectives. ChicPoint app is a prime example of the Petal Ads impact and influence in the e-commerce sphere, and is now col-

laborating with Petal Ads during the upcoming e-commerce marketing season.

Since the beginning of 2022, Petal Ads has supported ChicPoint to launch campaign across the Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait) utilizing a suite of promotional features on AppGallery, including feature cards, top banner cards and rankings. Through the collaboration, ChicPoint has amplified organic downloads, boosting its monthly revenue by 40 per cent, and reduced the app activation cost to less than \$1.

We are excited to take this next step of Petal Ads journey. We look forward to your continued partnership in exploring new advertising possibilities in 2023 and beyond.



Sibusiso Sizatu (left), skipper of the ArchAngel yacht, sails with his crew offshore Cape Town. — AFP photos



Justin Peters, a member of the ArchAngel yacht crew, pulls on a rope while getting the boat ready to sail offshore Cape Town.



Sibusiso Sizatu, skipper of the ArchAngel yacht, looks at the rigging while sailing with his crew offshore Cape Town.

# SOUTH AFRICAN SKIPPER SEEKS WIN FOR DIVERSITY IN RACE TO BRAZIL

The first time he saw the ocean, Sibusiso Sizatu thought that, with all that water, it must have been a very large lake. A couple of decades later, the former herd boy is getting ready to sail across that same ocean in an iconic race, helming an all-South African team that hopes to inspire a new generation of black yachtsmen.

"It's gonna be an eye-opener for the youngsters out there," Sizatu, 30, wearing a white polo shirt, told AFP standing on a Cape Town dock besides his boat, the Alexforbes ArchAngel.

The ArchAngel is to set sail for Rio de Janeiro on January 2, as part of the Cape2Rio race first staged in 1971. It will be racing against more than a dozen other boats from five countries to cover the more than 6,000 kilometers (3,728 miles) of Atlantic waters separating the two cities.



Sibusiso Sizatu, skipper of the ArchAngel yacht, sails with his crew offshore Cape Town on November 13, 2022. The ArchAngel is to set sail for Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, on January 2, as part of the Cape2Rio race.

Sizatu reckons his 35 feet (10 meters) sloop has a shot at victory, but being at the starting line is arguably already a success for the skipper and his four-strong crew. "The first aim is to finish the race," he said. "Winning it will be some extra bonus."



A member of the ArchAngel yacht crew looks on while sailing offshore Cape Town.



Members of the ArchAngel yacht crew get the boat ready to sail offshore Cape Town on November 13, 2022. The ArchAngel is to set sail for Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, on January 2, as part of the Cape2Rio race.

## Open waters

The crew—four men and one woman—is the first all hailing from the Royal Cape Yacht Club sailing academy to take part in the race. The academy was set up in 2012 to help youngsters from marginalised communities make it in a sport dominated by rich white people.

As a child Sizatu used to herd his family's livestock in a rural part of the Eastern Cape province before moving to a Cape Town township at the age of nine. There he started going to school and was first introduced to sailing by a friend. He didn't quite like it. Open waters didn't inspire much confidence and sea-sickness was a hard sell.

He much preferred football and hoped to make it as a professional. Sailing

seemed a luxury pastime for wealthy retirees, a world away from life in the township, where drugs and violence abounded but money was in short supply. On the first outing, he swam back to shore.

Things changed when his friend asked him to tag along for a yacht race and their boat won. Sizatu said he realized sailing was "a sport" and not just "having fun in the water playing with the boat."

"I saw an opportunity," he said. While chances to become a footballer were quite slim, with millions of others chasing the same dream, few young South Africans were trying their luck at sea. "I was like 'okay, this is where I can actually make myself something great out of,'" he said.

## 'Smooth sailing'

He grew to like the ocean and became very good at steering a boat over it. "It's very peaceful and calm when you're out in the water, you forget about everything else," he said. Still, it wasn't all smooth sailing. He often didn't have money to travel to events or buy food to eat once he was there.

And until the age of 20, he had no ID documents, which made competing abroad quite tricky. But Sizatu said he found a supportive community in the Cape Town sailing world that helped him out broadening his horizons along the way. Now he is hoping to broaden those of the sport.

"I'd like to see more like diversity," he said. "There are still some people that

don't see us as part of this, the racism is still out there." Challenging perceptions was one of the reasons that he has long dreamt of competing in the Cape2Rio with a crew which has shared a similar path to his. Sizatu said his team stuck together even if many could have been tempted to join other boats looking for crew, while the ArchAngel searched for a sponsor to support the adventure.

Aged 21 to 30 — Sizatu is the oldest—the crew is young, motivated and skilled. Yet only one of them has completed an ocean crossing before. "This is gonna be a big stepping stone for all of us," said Sizatu. — AFP

## Cyclists brave Lahore smog to convince drivers to ditch their cars

Cyclists in Pakistan's smog-smothered Lahore are enduring hazardous pollution levels, abuse from drivers and social stigma in a campaign to get people to ditch their cars. Each week around 100 adults and children, some wearing masks or scarves wrapped around their mouths and noses, jump on their bikes to cycle around landmarks in the city of more than 11 million people.

"The smog is a huge concern for us because there are so many cars now and the population has increased so much," said Afia Khan, who joined the initiative in August. But it is an uphill challenge encouraging people to take up the environmentally friendly mode of transport, and the group often require a police escort to keep them safe in a city that lacks dedicated bicycle lanes.

Cyclists are "at the mercy of these ruthless motorbikes, chingchies (auto rickshaws) and cars" that have not embraced the idea of sharing the roads with cyclists, said Rana Sohail, the head of Clean Pakistan Green Pakistan, which launched the venture with Critical Mass Lahore. "The government needs to create a more cycling-friendly infrastructure," participant Humayun Qureshi told AFP at the latest event on Sunday, which

he attended with his wife and two daughters.

There is also a pervasive attitude in deeply conservative Pakistan that sport, including cycling, is inappropriate for women, who risk harassment from men. "Going biking alone as a woman can be difficult because of the harassment you're going to face," Zarwa Jamal, a student who was cycling with her whole family, told AFP.



The single-player simulation game "Dwarf Fortress," on a monitor at the home office of Bay 12 Games cofounders, brothers Zach Adams and Tarn Adams, in Poulsbo, Washington, west of Seattle. — AFP photos

"It's truly great to be able to go with the group because I'm ensured of my safety."

Lahore consistently ranks as one of the world's most polluted large cities, with industrial pollutants, smoke from seasonal crop burn-off, fumes from vehicles and colder winter temperatures coalescing into toxic smog. In November a court ruling forced authorities to close schools on Fridays and Saturdays, as

well as the usual Sunday break, due to high levels of air pollution.

Understanding about the terrible health impacts of smog has increased in the past few years, putting pressure on the authorities to come up with measures to tackle the problem. "The point of reaching actual awareness is still far, but hopefully we will slowly achieve it," said cyclist Tanzeel ur Rehman. — AFP



The cycle rally organized by the city administration in connection with an anti-smog campaign in Lahore.



This handout picture taken and released on December 19, 2022 by Ukrainian Emergency Ministry shows a fire at a critical power infrastructure after a drone attack in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.



An injured man stands on a street after Russian shelling to Ukrainian city of Kherson on December 24, 2022, where five were killed and 20 injured.

# With optimism and resilience, world gears to usher in 2023

## Looking back at a rollercoaster year 2022

Four plagues dominated 2022: A literal pestilence, war, inflation and climate change. They will continue to cast a loathsome shadow as we pass the New Year. But with some optimism and ingenuity, 2023 can bring recovery and resurgence. Women carry belongings salvaged from their flooded home after monsoon rains in Pakistan. The war in Ukraine, the lingering coronavirus pandemic and climate change are putting intense pressure on the world's poorest in 2022.

Covid continued to exact a high death toll, and a lingering legacy of ill health and disruptions to work and travel. Most parts of the world, aided by vaccinations, have accepted the disease as endemic, with a steady revival of commuting and tourism boosting oil demand.

China, though, persisted in its zero-COVID policy, with oil prices oscillating in response to every oracular pronouncement from the politburo.

On December 6, its coronavirus czar Sun Chunlan ripped off the sticking plaster: the most draconian restrictions were lifted. A wave of sickness and death promptly spread across the Middle



In this file photo taken on December 12, 2022 a resident (left) receives a COVID-19 vaccine in Danzhai county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, in China's southwestern Guizhou province, as medical workers vaccinate people who can't go out conveniently from their homes.

imposed. Oil prices did surge following the conflict's outbreak, but since June and especially November, they have fallen back to their starting point, even

High energy prices, illness-induced absenteeism, disrupted supply chains and geopolitically-mediated trade protectionism have all helped stoke inflation. Tighter global monetary conditions by central banks globally, particularly in the US and Europe, have raised the risk of a recession and contributed to lower oil prices.

The cut-offs of Russian gas and the consequent scramble for limited supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG) led to a revival in the use of coal, the most polluting fuel, across Europe and Asia.

November's Cop27 conference in Egypt produced some progress on technical issues and finance, but no breakthroughs on climate ambition. In the summer, record heatwaves struck Europe and China, and unprecedented floods deluged Pakistan. In the Middle East, Gulf countries have warded off these plagues better than almost anywhere else.

The pandemic has been handled well, oil production was allowed to rise until October, energy prices and investment have been strong and inflation moderate. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait all saw their strongest economic growth for about a decade this year. Despite all the usual hotspots, the region has thankfully avoided further serious conflict, apart from the brutal response to the protests in Iran. But most of the remainder of the world has suffered. So what reason is there for optimism in 2023?

Hopefully, progress on combating COVID will continue, the China wave will recede, and no more serious variants will emerge. Continuing gains in travel would support oil demand; it would also ease some of the damaging isolationism and lack of person-to-person contact from the past three years. Much violence lies ahead in Ukraine, but the loss of gas revenues and the tightening measures against oil exports will constrict the Russian economy.

The weather over the remaining two to three winter months will be crucial for Europe's living standards and industry. The continent's political coherence has remained impressively solid. Observers have warned that 2023 will be an even tougher year for Europe's gas consumers since it will receive virtually no Russian supplies for the whole year to refill its drained storage.

There is little new LNG on the world market until 2025. Government coffers to support industries and households are emptying. But as long as Brussels can avoid some mooted, misguided gas market policies, it should actually come



Rescuers help an injured woman after Russian shelling to Ukrainian city of Kherson where five were killed and 20 injured on December 24, 2022.

through better next year.

Repairs to French nuclear stations, a surge in renewable installations, better energy efficiency and - unfortunately - recession and deindustrialization, will reduce gas demand.

New LNG import terminals in Germany and elsewhere provide better access for gas to central Europe.



An Afghan burqa-clad woman sits in a parked taxi along the roadside in Kandahar on December 25, 2022.

A more open confrontation between Washington and Beijing remains an unlikely though potentially cataclysmic prospect. Closer to home, it will take wise policies to avoid combustion between a besieged Iranian regime, the failure of the nuclear negotiations, and a hawkish Israeli government.

The oil market will be wrenched between sanctions on Russia, OPEC policy, the odd supply disruption elsewhere, and demand. In turn, demand depends on economic growth, with a feared global

recession. But a mild downturn - not a repeat of 2008-2009 or 2020 - would still see some oil consumption growth, and a moderation of prices rather than a collapse, with room for OPEC to fine-tune output. The International Monetary Fund forecasts global inflation halving by the end of next year.

Key motors for tackling climate change



This handout photo taken on December 25, 2022 and received on December 26 from the Philippine Coast Guard shows rescuers evacuating a child from a flooded area in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. Two people were killed and nearly 46,000 others fled their homes as Christmas Day floods dampened the mainly Catholic Philippines's most important holiday, civil defense officials said on December 26.

are gaining momentum. Today's expensive and insecure energy, along with huge new climate and energy packages in the US and EU, will spur the deployment of new gas to replace coal, renewables, electric vehicles, advanced nuclear power, breakthrough batteries, hydrogen and carbon capture. The UAE, hosting Cop28 next November, has a crucial opportunity to advance bold but practical cuts in emissions.

For all the solar panels we see on European roofs and Teslas on Gulf roads, we will all breathe a little easier when we see global greenhouse emissions actually falling. Global heating drives energy insecurity, disease, war, inflation and economic decline. Next year can see victories over viruses and violence, conflict and climate change.

In Afghanistan, Taliban rulers ordered all national and international NGOs to stop their women employees from working after "serious complaints" about their dress code, the Ministry of Economy told AFP on Saturday. Earlier, Afghan universities were declared off limits to women because female students were not following instructions including a proper dress code. — Agencies



Winter storm Elliot moved through the Middle Tennessee region through the night leaving behind freezing rain, snow and below freezing temperatures, in Nashville, Tennessee on December 23, 2022.

Kingdom. Some have speculated that Russia's military offensive in Ukraine was influenced by the pandemic isolation of the man in the Kremlin. From an energy point of view, though, the conflict was well-timed.

The slow strangulation of Europe's gas supplies from September 2021 threatened the continent. The rise in oil prices from the early 2020 crash, aided by Russia's alliance with Opec limited the severity of sanctions that could be

though Opec resumed its production cuts, and Europe and the US belatedly introduced unprecedented bans and price caps on Russian oil exports.

Gas prices have also dropped from August's extremities, though they are still very high by historic standards. A warm start to the winter has helped European residents, even though colder weather has blown into both Europe and North America more recently.



Villager Makkam Janjigotov walks with his cattle, near the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in the village of Ak-Say some 1000 km from Bishkek on December 10, 2022. Combing through the charred ruins of a primary school in the village of Ak-Say in Kyrgyzstan, teacher Nasipa Nishanbekova picks up dusty exercise books with uncertain childish writing. For the past three months, the school has lain abandoned after being mostly destroyed during border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in September which killed more than 100 people.



In this handout picture taken and released on December 20, 2022 by the Ukrainian Presidential press services Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky (right) hands out the State Award to a soldier during a medal giving ceremony to Ukrainian servicemen who have been holding back a fierce and months-long Russian military campaign for the city, as part of Zelensky's visit in the eastern frontline city of Bakhmut, now the epicenter of fighting in Russia's nearly 10-month invasion of Ukraine. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Britain's King Charles III (right) flanked by Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort (left) waves to members of the public as he arrives for the Royal Family's traditional Christmas Day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham, Norfolk, eastern England, on December 25, 2022.



A family sits in a living room in Liverpool, as they watch Britain's King Charles III delivering his first annual Christmas Day message, on television, on December 25, 2022.— AFP photos

# KING CHARLES HAILS UK 'SOLIDARITY' IN HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

King Charles III has hailed the "heartfelt solidarity" of people across the recession-hit UK struggling with a worsening cost of living crisis, in his first Christmas Day message as monarch. Addressing the country from the Windsor Castle chapel where his mother, Elizabeth II, was interred in September, the 74-year-old also thanked people for the "love and sympathy" expressed following her death.

Standing beside a sparkling Christmas tree, the sovereign noted in the annual pre-recorded royal message-broadcast at 1500 GMT—that it is a "particularly poignant time for all of us who have lost loved ones". He then turned to the impact of the country's growing economic woes, as decades-high inflation eats into earnings and escalates strikes over pay across the public and private sectors.

"I particularly want to pay tribute to all those wonderfully kind people who so generously give food or donations, or... their time, to support those around them in greatest need," Charles said, dressed in a blue suit. "Our churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and gurdwaras have once again united in feeding the hungry, providing love and support throughout the year." The king also commended charities for their "extraordinary work in the most difficult circumstances". He added: "Such heartfelt solidarity is



Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort arrive for the Royal Family's traditional Christmas Day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham, Norfolk, eastern England, on December 25, 2022.

the most inspiring expression of loving our neighbour as our self." Charles ascended to the throne when Elizabeth died on September 8 after a record-breaking seven-decade reign. He also took over as head of state of 14 Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

**'Compassion'**  
His coronation will take place on May 6 next year, with Buckingham Palace vowing to reflect the monarchy's historic traditions and its modern role. In his inaugural Christmas message, Charles said both he and his late mother shared "a belief in the extraordinary ability of each person to

touch, with goodness and compassion, the lives of others".

"This is the essence of our community and the very foundation of our society," he added, praising public sector workers from the armed forces to emergency responders to teachers. In a return to tradition for Britain's royals-interrupted by the pandemic-they gathered for Christmas Day this year at Sandringham, their private winter retreat in eastern England. Charles and Queen Consort Camilla, 75, were joined by Prince William and wife Kate and their children Princes George and Louis and Princess Charlotte-at a local church service.

Disgraced Prince Andrew, who has been sidelined over his links to the late US pedophile financier Jeffrey Epstein and claims of sex with a minor, was also among the royals who greeted well-wishers outside. However, US-based Prince Harry and wife Meghan were notable absentees, as their ongoing feud with the family shows little sign of abating.

The couple risked deepening the rift-which first became public when they sensationally quit royal life in early 2020 — by airing various grievances in a six-part Netflix docuseries this month. It follows a series of other broadsides they have launched against the royal family



Britain's Sophie, Countess of Wessex arrives for the Royal Family's traditional Christmas Day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham, Norfolk, eastern England, on December 25, 2022.

since relocating to California, with more set to come. Harry will publish a contentious memoir-named "Spare"-within weeks. — AFP



Britain's Prince Andrew, Duke of York (R) speaks with the priest as he leaves at the end of the Royal Family's traditional Christmas Day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham, Norfolk, eastern England, on December 25, 2022.



Members of St Mary's Ukrainian Choir perform during the 'Royal Carols: Together At Christmas', at Westminster Abbey in London.



Two dressed-up dogs are pictured ahead of the arrival of members of Britain's Royal Family for their traditional Christmas Day service at St Mary Magdalene Church in Sandringham, Norfolk, eastern England, on December 25, 2022.

## Slavery apology start of 'long journey': Dutch king

Dutch King Willem-Alexander welcomed the government's apology for the Netherlands' role in 250 years of slavery in his Christmas address on Sunday, saying it was the "start of a

long journey". Prime Minister Mark Rutte on Monday officially apologized for the Dutch state's involvement in slavery in its former colonies, calling it a "crime against humanity". "Nobody today bears responsibility for the inhumane acts that were inflicted on the lives of men, women and children," Willem-Alexander said from the palace of Huis ten Bosch in The Hague. "But by honestly facing our shared past and recognizing the crime against humanity that is slavery, we lay the ground for a

shared future—a future in which we stand against all modern forms of discrimination, exploitation and injustice." "The apology offered by the government is the start of a long journey."

The Netherlands funded its "Golden Age" of empire and culture in the 16th and 17th centuries by shipping around 600,000 Africans as part of the slave trade, mostly to South America and the Caribbean. The Dutch government says several major commemorative events will be held from next year and has

announced a 200-million-euro (\$212-million) fund for social initiatives.

Willem-Alexander promised that the topic would retain the royal family's attention during the commemorative year and that they would remain "involved". But Rutte's move went against the wishes of some slavery commemoration organizations who wanted the apology to be offered on July 1, 2023. Descendants of Dutch slavery will then celebrate 150 years of liberation from slavery in an annual celebration called "Keti Koti"

(Breaking the Chains) in Suriname. The leaders of Caribbean island Sint Maarten and Suriname in South America regretted the lack of dialogue from the Netherlands over the apology. Some former Dutch colonies have demanded compensation for slavery and criticized the government for not offering concrete actions. — AFP



Dutch King Willem-Alexander.



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (right) addresses a speech in the National Archives in The Hague.



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte addresses a speech on the Netherlands' involvement in slavery, in the National Archives in The Hague. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Jokic scores 41 points, sparks Nuggets over visitors Phoenix

## Most valuable player Jokic delivers epic triple-double

## News in brief

### LPGA's record winner Whitworth dies at 83

WASHINGTON: Kathy Whitworth, the most successful LPGA golfer with a record 88 titles, has died at the age of 83, the women's tour announced Sunday. Her wins are six more than Sam Snead and Tiger Woods, who hold the career record for the men's game. "It is with a heavy heart that we share the news that LPGA Hall of Famer Kathy Whitworth has died at the age of 83," the tour said on its official Twitter account. A statement on the LPGA's website by Bettye Odle, Whitworth's long-time partner, said that "Kathy passed suddenly Saturday night celebrating Christmas Eve with family and friends." As well as her 88 tournament victories—which included six majors—Whitworth was runner-up 93 times in a career which started in 1959. "I was really fortunate in that I knew what I wanted to do," Whitworth once said. "Golf just grabbed me by the throat. I can't tell you how much I loved it. I used to think everyone knew what they wanted to do when they were 15 years old."

### Haaland can score 800 goals, says De Bruyne

LONDON: Kevin De Bruyne believes Manchester City teammate Erling Haaland can go on and score 800 goals before his career ends. Haaland, who will return to the city of his birth when the champions resume their Premier League title defense at Leeds on Wednesday, has scored 24 goals in just 19 appearances since his summer move from Borussia Dortmund. "He already has about 200 goals, so he can probably go to 600, 700 or 800 if he stays fit and does the things that he does," said De Bruyne. The Belgian international has played with a host of top strikers in his career and is well-placed when it comes to 22-year-old Haaland's place in the pecking order. De Bruyne enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the club's record goalscorer Sergio Agüero before the Argentinean left the Etihad Stadium in 2021. He has also combined with Romelu Lukaku on international duty, former City teammate Gabriel Jesus and new World Cup-winner Julian Alvarez, a current fellow City player.

### Struggling Wolves sign Cunha from Atletico

MADRID: Atletico Madrid striker Matheus Cunha on Sunday agreed a loan deal with rock-bottom English Premier League side Wolves, the Spanish club announced. The 23-year-old Brazilian moved to Spain from Hertha Berlin in Germany in 2021 for a fee of 26 million euros but struggled to make any significant impact with the Madrid club. He scored seven goals last season but hasn't found the net in 17 appearances in the current campaign. "From Atletico Madrid we wish Matheus Cunha the best of success," said the Spanish club. Cunha will join Wolves from January 1 subject to work permit approval with a permanent deal - reportedly worth a club-record £43million (48.5 million euros) - an option. "Matheus Cunha will become Julen Lopetegui's first signing as Wolves head coach, joining on loan from 1st January, subject to work permit," said a Wolves statement. "The Brazilian international flew to the UK and completed his medical earlier in the week, finalising a loan move which will automatically become a permanent deal until 2027, should certain clauses be triggered."

### Top Australian Test award named after Shane Warne

MELBOURNE: Australia's men's Test Player of the Year award will be renamed in Shane Warne's honor, officials said Monday, as tributes were paid to the late spin-king at the Boxing Day Test against South Africa. Warne, considered by many as second in stature only to Donald Bradman in sports-mad Australia, died unexpectedly aged just 52 in March. The Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year award will be presented annually, second only to the prestigious Allan Border Medal for the most outstanding player across all formats. "As one of Australia's all-time greats, it is fitting we acknowledge Shane's extraordinary contribution to Test cricket by naming this award in his honor in perpetuity," said Cricket Australia chief Nick Hockley. The announcement came on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Warne's home venue where he achieved many memorable feats, including an Ashes hat-trick and his 700th Test wicket. —From AFP

NEW YORK: Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic delivered an epic triple-double to give Denver an overtime triumph on Sunday while Jayson Tatum powered NBA-best Boston to victory. Serbian 27-year-old superstar center Jokic scored 41 points, grabbed 15 rebounds and passed off 15 assists to spark the Nuggets over visitors Phoenix 128-125.

Jokic's point total, coming on 16-of-25 shooting from the floor, was the largest for any Christmas triple-double in NBA history. "It's nice. It's just one game," Jokic said. "Everybody can have one good game." It was Jokic's 83rd career triple-double and his seventh of this season. The victory gave the Nuggets (21-11) a one-game Western Conference lead over Memphis, who lost Sunday at defending champions Golden State, and New Orleans.

"We keep fighting," Jokic said of the comeback victory. "We have a lot of guys who can play. I'm just happy that we are winning. We're playing really good." Denver's Aaron Gordon added 28 points, many on high-leaping slam dunks, and 13 rebounds while Jamal Murray had 26 points. Murray's dunk with 11 seconds remaining in regulation sent the game to overtime tied at 113-113, while a late dunk and free throw in overtime by Gordon helped seal Denver's triumph.

"It was a crazy game, a lot of up and down, a lot of runs for both teams," Jokic said. "I think it's supposed to be easier game for us. We got the win. That's the most important thing." Reserve Landry Shamut scored 31 points to lead Phoenix, who lost star Devin Booker to a groin injury after playing only four minutes. At Boston, Tatum matched Jokic with 41 points to lead the Celtics over Milwaukee 139-118 in a showdown of the league's two top clubs.

Jaylen Brown added 29 points for the Celtics, who improved to 24-10 and stretched their Eastern Conference lead over the Bucks (22-11). "They are one of the best teams in the league and it's always special to play on Christmas," Tatum said. "We just wanted to give our fans a present today and come out of here with a victory." Tatum scored 20 points in the third quarter on 7-of-10 shooting as the Celtics boosted their 62-61 halftime lead to 100-86 entering the fourth quarter.



NEW YORK: Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets and Torrey Craig #0 of the Phoenix Suns compete for a loose ball at Ball Arena on December 25, 2022. —AFP

"We wanted to come out in the second half, especially at the start of that third quarter, with some pace and some energy," Tatum said. Tatum delivered the most spectacular hoop of the game with a slam dunk over Milwaukee star big man Giannis Antetokounmpo, who finished with 27 points and nine rebounds but no blocked shots. "You've got to attack the rim," Tatum said. "If you go in there and lay it up, he's going to send it to the parking lot."

Golden State, without injured top scorer Stephen Curry, defeated Memphis 123-109 to knock the Grizzlies from a share of the West lead. Jordan Poole scored 32 points to lead Golden State before getting his second technical foul and being ejected with 9:20 remaining. The Warriors improved to 13-2 at home and 16-18 overall. Ja Morant had 36 points, seven rebounds and eight assists to lead the Grizzlies. Klay Thompson added

24 points for the Warriors.

### Sixers beat Knicks

Joel Embiid and James Harden sparked Philadelphia's 119-112 victory at New York, the 76ers' eighth consecutive triumph. Cameroonian star Embiid struck 35 points and eight rebounds while Harden contributed 29 points and 13 assists. New York's Julius Randle scored 35 points and Jalen Brunson added 23 points and 11 assists before leaving with an apparent right-hip injury in the fourth quarter. At Dallas, the host Mavericks got 32 points, nine rebounds and nine assists from Slovenian star Luka Doncic in downing the Los Angeles Lakers 124-115. LeBron James scored a game-high 38 points with six rebounds and five assists but the Lakers (13-20) dropped their fourth game in a row since Anthony Davis was sidelined with a right foot injury. —AFP



Abdallah Shelbayeh



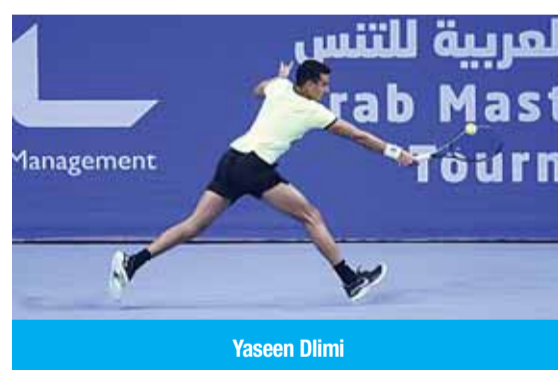
Mohammad Safwat

## Players battle for top spots at Arab Masters Tennis Tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 2nd Arab Masters Tennis Tournament will come to a conclusion tomorrow with the final singles match at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. Activities will start by 4:00 pm with the match to decide third and fourth place in the presence of Chairman of the Board of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, President of the Union of Arab Union of Arab National Olympic Committees Major General Ahmad Nasser Kama, Vice President of International Federation of Sport for all Dr Emad Mustafa Al-Banani, Ambassadors and sports personalities.

The doubles final match was between Tunisians Mohammad Aziz Dougaz and Iskander Al-Mansouri and Jordanian's Abdallah Shelbayeh and Mousa Alkotop. The third place deciding match was also played between Moroccans Walid Ahouda and Yassine Dlimi against Egyptians Kareem Maamoun and Mohammad Safwat.



Yaseen Dlimi

In the men's singles semi finalists, Lebanon's Benjamin Hassan beat Egypt's Akram Al-Sallali 6-4/6-1 and Jordan's Abdallah Shelbayeh defeated Egypt's Kareem Maamoun 6-4/6-1. Also, Moroccan Yaseen Dlimi defeated Egypt's Mohammad Safwat 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 while Mohamad Aziz Dougaz (from Tunis) defeated his compatriot Mohamed Oukaa 6-4/6-0.

Jordan's Abdallah Shelbayeh is impressed with Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. "This is my first visit to this facility, and it will not be the last. The facility meets all requirements and is among the best in the world. It provides an ideal sports environment for any athletes," he said.



Benjamin Hassan

## All Blacks Mo'unga, Frizell ink post-World Cup Japan deals

WELLINGTON: New Zealand playmaker Richie Mo'unga announced Monday he will take up a three-year Japan club deal after next year's Rugby World Cup, potentially ending his career in Tests and Super Rugby. Mo'unga will be joined by fellow All Black Shannon Frizell at the Toshiba Brave Lupus in early 2024. Both 28-year-olds will leave sizeable holes to fill after making regular Test appearances this year, although Mo'unga will be most keenly missed by New Zealand supporters.

His skilled general play and accurate goalkicking have seen him overtake Beauden Barrett as the All Blacks' first-choice fly-half, tallying 370 points in 44 Tests since his debut in 2018. Crusaders coach Scott Robertson described Mo'unga as "one of the

most influential Super Rugby players ever" and a central part of the team's streak of six successive titles since 2017. Mo'unga said it will be difficult to leave the club after his ninth and final season next year.

"The Crusaders have been my life for ever, even before I joined the team it was my life, dreaming of being part of the family," he said in a statement. "Looking back at my time with the team since 2015, it makes me so grateful to be part of such a franchise, part of some really awesome memories, some great achievements and great moments, and to just meet some really special people." In 94 games for the Crusaders, Mo'unga has scored 1,010 points to sit seventh on Super Rugby's all-time scorer list.

Robertson said his playmaker's influence extended beyond raw points. "Through his performances in the biggest games, the biggest moments - he stood up," Robertson said. "He's a special man, a local boy, pride of the community, and there's no doubt about it - Richie can play." "When Richie is on, the team is on. He brings out the best from all the players. For me, he is one of the most influential



New Zealand's Richie Mo'unga

Super Rugby players ever - how he plays the game, his ability to score points consistently year after year in those crucial moments." Abrasive Tongan-born flanker Frizell has played 25 Tests since his 2018 debut, the same year he made his Super Rugby start with the Highlanders. —AFP



## English Premier League returns

Kane on target for Spurs • Newcastle cruise • Fulham beat 9-man Palace



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (center) fails his attempt during the English Premier League football match between Brentford and Tottenham Hotspur on December 26, 2022. — AFP

**LONDON:** Antonio Conte hailed Harry Kane's character after the England captain recovered from his World Cup heartache to help Tottenham rescue a 2-2 draw at Brentford, while Newcastle climbed to second place with a 3-0 win at Leicester on Monday.

In the first Premier League fixture since the World Cup break in mid-November, Tottenham were in danger of a damaging defeat after Vitaly Janelt and Ivan Toney put Brentford in command at the Community Stadium. Janelt fired home after 15 minutes with a close-range finish after Tottenham keeper Fraser Forster spilled Mathias Jensen's shot.

Toney struck from close-range in the 54th minute from Christian Norgaard's flick on. But Kane netted with a 65th minute header to start the Tottenham recovery in his first game since missing a crucial penalty in England's World Cup quarter-final defeat against France.

Brentford have not beaten Tottenham since 1948 and their long wait for a victory over the north

Londoners goes on after Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg curled home with 19 minutes left. Tottenham boss Conte praised England captain Kane for his contribution following his World Cup disappointment.

"When he came back he was good. We know the importance of Harry for us, his personality, his character. He's the best player we have. I'm happy that he scored today," Conte said. "Since last season we have made a good step. Now we have to continue to push ourselves. It is not easy. We have shown big character," Conte said.

Tottenham stay fourth in the table, four points ahead of fifth-placed Manchester United in the race to qualify for the Champions League. Newcastle are three points ahead of Tottenham as their unexpected push for a top four finish gathers pace. The Magpies, revitalized by boss Eddie Howe since their Saudi-backed takeover, were ahead with less than three minutes on the clock when Chris Wood converted a penalty awarded for Daniel Amartey's foul on Joelinton.

### Ascendent Newcastle

Newcastle doubled their lead in sublime fashion in the sixth minute as Miguel Almiron played a one-two with Bruno Guimaraes and slotted past Danny Ward for his eighth goal in his last eight league games. Joelinton headed home from a corner in the 32nd minute as Newcastle made it six successive league victories - their best run in the competition since 2012.

Newcastle are now just four points behind leaders Arsenal, who host London rivals West Ham later on Monday. Everton suffered a damaging 2-1 defeat against relegation rivals Wolves as Rayan Ait-Nouri struck in final seconds for the visitors at Goodison Park. Yerry Mina gave Everton a seventh minute lead when the Colombia defender headed home from Dwight McNeil's corner.

Wolves levelled midway through the first half as Joao Moutinho's cross was volleyed in by Daniel Podence. Ait-Nouri poked home from close range after Everton failed to deal with a counter-attack in

the fifth minute of stoppage-time. Third bottom Wolves now sit only one point behind fourth bottom Everton, whose manager Frank Lampard is under increasing pressure.

Southampton slipped to the bottom of the table after a 3-1 home defeat against south-coast rivals Brighton. Adam Lallana headed Brighton in front against his former club in the 14th minute and Romain Perraud's own goal increased the lead 10 minutes before half-time. Brighton struck again early in the second half through Solly March's long-range blast.

James Ward-Prowse reduced the deficit on the rebound after his penalty was saved by Robert Sanchez, but it wasn't enough to avoid defeat in boss Nathan Jones' first home league game in charge. Fulham won 3-0 at nine-man Crystal Palace, who had Tyrick Mitchell and James Tomkins sent off. Bobby De Cordova-Reid, Tim Ream and Aleksandar Mitrovic scored Fulham's goals. — AFP

## Azam, Sarfaraz punish sloppy NZ in first Test

**KARACHI:** Babar Azam knocked a fighting hundred and the recalled Sarfaraz Ahmed hit a half century to guide Pakistan to a healthy 317-5 on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand in Karachi on Monday. The pair led Pakistan's recovery from 110-4 during a 196-run fifth wicket stand, as the home team lost only Sarfaraz in the last two sessions.

New Zealand spinners had taken three early wickets on a spin-assisting National Stadium pitch and one before lunch but had to wait until the closing moments when Ajaz Patel got Sarfaraz caught in the slip for 86. At close, Azam was unbeaten on 161 and Agha Salman three as the home team looked to lift from last week's 3-0 loss at the hands of England, their first ever white-wash at home.

Azam now has 1,170 runs in nine Tests this year - the highest run scorer in Tests in 2022. He also beat Mohammad Yousuf's 2006 aggregate of 2,435 in all three formats, taking 2,584 runs across the board this year. The Pakistan skipper swept spinner Michael Bracewell for a six towards mid-wicket to reach his ninth Test century. He has also hit 16 boundaries.

Sarfaraz, playing his 50th Test and first since January 2019, cracked nine boundaries in his 256-minute knock but missed out on a century. "It's something I am sad about, but then I look back and think, 'what if I had fallen without scoring?'," he said. Happy to return to the field after fearing he would not play for his country again, he confessed to needing some support from his team. "When I went in and played the first three deliveries I had a very fast heartbeat, so during the lunch break my fellow players and Azam told me to relax, so I was calmer afterwards," he said.



KARACHI: Pakistan's captain Babar Azam plays a shot during the first day of the first cricket Test match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the National Stadium in Karachi on December 26, 2022. — AFP

### Costly miss

New Zealand will be rueing letting Azam off the hook when he was on just 12, after Daryl Mitchell spilled a regulation catch at slip off Bracewell. The tourists also failed to run out Azam on 54 when Devon Conway missed the stumps, with the Pakistan skipper well short of his crease. "Babar made the most of his chance and batted really well," said Patel. "Obviously no one wants to drop catches but it happens sometimes, it's just the nature of the game."

New Zealand's spinners dominated the first session, with Bracewell dismissing Shan Masood for three and Imam-ul-Haq for 24, while Patel took the early wicket of Abdullah Shafique for seven. In the penultimate over before lunch, fast bowler Tim Southee dismissed Saud Shakeel for 22 to complete a successful session for the tourists, playing their first Test series in Pakistan since 2002. New Zealand's decision to play with three spinners appeared justified, as the National Stadium pitch took turn right from the start. Patel came on to bowl in just the fourth over of the innings. — AFP

## Australia seize control of 2nd S Africa Test

**MELBOURNE:** Allrounder Cameron Green took a career-best 5-27 as Australia ripped through South Africa's fragile batting before piling on late runs to seize control of the second Test in Melbourne on Monday. After the visitors were dismissed for 189, an aggressive David Warner, in his 100th Test, was unbeaten on 32 and Marnus Labuschagne was not out on five to steer the hosts to 45-1 at stumps on day one.

Usman Khawaja was out for one, caught behind by Kyle Verreynne off Kagiso Rabada. Australia won the first of three Tests by six wickets inside two days on a hostile and green Gabba pitch in Brisbane last week. The wicket at the Melbourne Cricket Ground was less bowler-friendly, but captain Pat Cummins surprisingly chose to field at a venue where toss-winning teams normally bat first.

South African skipper Dean Elgar said he was bewildered by the decision, but it proved to be inspired in front of 64,876 fans with the Proteas losing early wickets as they again struggled against the hosts' bowling firepower. After slumping to 67-5, Verreynne and Marco Jansen launched a stirring fight-back in a gutsy 112-run stand.

But then Green - the second-most expensive buy at the Indian Premier League auction last week - went on a blitz, snapping the partnership when Verreynne got an outside edge on 52 that Steve Smith collected. Two balls later, Jansen was gone, caught by wicket-keeper Alex Carey for 59 off Green before the giant Australian bowled Kagiso Rabada and Lungi Ngidi. Green took 4-8 in the spell with the Proteas losing their last five wickets for 10 runs.

South Africa started the day nervously, losing Sarel



MELBOURNE: Australia's Scott Boland (right) bowls as South African batsman Kyle Verreynne (left) watches on the first day of the second cricket Test match between Australia and South Africa at the MCG in Melbourne on December 26, 2022. — AFP

Erwee and Theunis de Bruyn cheaply. They were stunned just before lunch when Elgar, who passed 5,000 Test runs, and the experienced Temba Bavuma departed in consecutive balls. It left them in trouble at 58-4 and the inexperienced middle order facing a daunting task.

When Khaya Zondo was out in the fifth over after lunch for five, courtesy of a stunning Marnus Labuschagne diving catch, the end looked nigh before Verreynne and Jansen dug in.

On a humid day, Cummins asked some searching early questions, dropping Elgar on seven off his own bowling and then having two big lbw shouts against Sarel Erwee denied. Erwee lived dangerously and was no match for local hero Scott Boland. The seamer, who took 6-7 in the corresponding Test against England a year ago, came on to thunderous applause and got the breakthrough in his second over, with Khawaja taking a low catch at third slip to remove Erwee for 18. South Africa's batting has been under the pump recently and as the senior player, Elgar knew he had to stick around. — AFP